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The Effects of Readers Theatre on Fluency and
Comprehension on Fifth Grade Students in
Regular Classrooms

by

Lila Ubert Carrick

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee
of Lehigh University
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Education
In
Reading

Lehigh University

November 7, 2000

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Dedication

In memory for my mother, who fostered in me a consciousness of the importance and power of reading and writing.

In memory for my father, who taught me the importance of working hard, never giving up, and always completing a task.

Acknowledgements

The years I spent at Leigh University in pursuit of a doctorate in reading were stimulating, challenging, and rewarding. During this time I had the opportunity to grow personally and professionally by creating a family literacy program, presenting at professional conferences, writing for publication, and spreading the word about Readers Theatre. Additionally I had time to chat with, work along the side of, and cement the bond that exists among fellow doctoral students.

During this time I was fortunate to have the support of a loving and caring family. My husband, John, nurtured my professional growth and personal endeavor. Without his intellectual and emotional support this academic endeavor would not have been possible. My daughter, Nicolie, shared with me the value of developing the whole child and the importance of integrating the performing arts across the curriculum. My son, Brett, whose passion for sports fostered an interest in reading *Sports Illustrated* at a very young age, made me of aware importance of offering alternative forms of reading material to young readers.

Additionally, I had the support and guidance of many excellent teachers. On my dissertation committee, I was fortunate to have four outstanding leaders in education.

Dr. Alden Moe, my dissertation advisor and committee chairperson guided me through the process of writing the dissertation from its inception to its

completion. His enthusiasm for this project and topic was always strong which was a constant source of energy for me. His encouragement to explore other venues for Readers Theatre is both greatly appreciated and very rewarding. He is truly an educator and a mentor.

Dr. Richard L. Allington, researcher and educator, by his wisdom and knowledge of oral reading encouraged me to expand the project and include another form of oral reading, repeated paired reading to the design. This suggestion added an exciting element to the project, one enjoyed both by the participants and me.

Dr. Ed Shapiro, school psychologist and educator, who in early stages of the pursuit for a doctorate taught me how to conduct a research project. His challenging questions drove me to delve deeper into my project, probe other sources, and emerge with a sense of intellectual accomplishment.

Dr. Barbara Traister, English teacher and listener, taught through modeling the qualities of fine writing. Her attention to details in writing and editing fostered in me an awareness of the attributes of a good writer. Her concerns, suggestions, and questions allowed me to grow as a writer.

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of Readers Theatre as a teaching strategy to promote reading ability. Readers Theatre, paired repeated reading, and the traditional method of using basal reading textbook were examined to determine their effectiveness in improving reading rate, reading word accuracy, and reading comprehension. Reading rate was calculated by multiplying number of words in the passage by 60 and divided by the number of seconds it took to read the passage. Reading accuracy was calculated by subtracting the number of miscues from the number of words in the passage. The *Terra Nova Reading Test, Level 15* was used to measure comprehension. Test results were analyzed using ANCOVA with the pretest serving as the covariate. Post-hoc analysis techniques (Scheffe) were used to further examine any statistically significant main effect. A total of 179 fifth grade students involved in the project comprised ten classrooms from four different schools within the same school district. This urban, special-needs district, in which the majority of the students are considered educationally at risk, is located in central New Jersey. The procedure for this quasi-experimental study followed a pretest, intervention (12 weeks), posttest schedule. A total of 47 students formed the control group (traditional method), 76 students formed the quasi-control group (paired repeated reading), and 56 students formed the experimental group (Readers Theatre). The results of the

ANCOVA showed a significant overall difference among the groups in reading rate. Further analysis using the Scheffe revealed that the experimental group (RT) outperformed both the quasi-control group (PR) and control group (TM). Additionally, the results of the ANCOVA showed a significant overall difference among the groups in word accuracy. Further analysis using the Scheffe revealed that the experimental group (RT) outperformed the control group (TM). The results of the ANCOVA showed no significant difference among the groups in reading comprehension. These results suggest that Readers Theatre does improve fluency, particularly oral reading rate and word accuracy. These gains are most likely attributed to developing automaticity, using prosodic cueing, and dramatically interacting with the text.

Chapter 1

Introduction

According to Allington (1983), fluency is the most neglected reading goal. It rarely appears as an instructional objective in teacher's manuals, lesson plans or skills hierarchies. Allington suggested that since fluency training can improve overall reading ability, readers should be given fluency instruction.

The practice of oral reading and its effectiveness has been a topic embraced by researchers during the past twenty years (Allington, 1984b; Hoffman, 1987; Hoffman & Clements, 1984; Morris & Nelson, 1992; Reutzel, Hollingsworth, & Eldredge, 1994; Stallings 1980). Reutzel, Hollingsworth, and Eldredge (1994) suggested that in consideration of all the research done on the value of oral reading in the classroom, many questions concerning the effectiveness of oral reading instruction remain unanswered. Allington (1984b) and Hoffman (1987) indicated that little is known about the effectiveness of oral reading classroom instruction and the impact it has on the reading growth and development of children.

One instructional method, repeated readings, has been documented by researchers as improving fluency (Carver & Hoffman, 1981; Chomsky, 1976; Dowhower, 1987; Gonzales & Elijah, 1975; Herman, 1986; Rashotte & Torgesen, 1985; Rasinski, 1990a; Samuels, 1979; Stoddard, Valcante, Sindelar, O'Shea, & Algozzine, 1993). Investigations have also revealed that repeated readings improve

reading comprehension (Amlund, Kardash, & Kulhavy, 1986; Dowhower, 1987; O'Shea, Sindelar, & O'Shea, 1985; Sindelar, Monda, & O'Shea, 1990; Taylor, Wade, & Yekovich, 1985).

Allington (1984b, p. 855) suggested that more research is needed to address the “social, communicative, interactive context of oral reading practice.” Hiebert (1996) suggested that the fundamental research in repeated reading offers promise in assisting struggling, middle-grade students become fluent readers. Stayter and Allington (1991) revealed that Readers Theatre, by its nature of repeated readings, enhances a student's ability to understand and transform the text. Nathan and Stanovitch (1991) recommended using Readers Theatre to promote fluency and comprehension. Harris and Sipay (1990) implied that script reading was the most interesting oral reading activity and provided children with an opportunity to read with natural expression.

Readers Theatre is a form of dramatics in which the scripts are read aloud by two or more participants. The readers use their voice and facial expressions as well as the muscle tone of their body to interpret a literary work in order to convey emotions, beliefs, attitudes, and motives to their audience. This “theatre of the mind” (Coger & White, 1967, p. 8) exists in the imaginations of both the audience and the performers (Robb, 1994). Presentations and performances are reminiscent of dramatic radio readings (Coger & White; Sebesta, 1992).

This highly motivational instructional reading strategy (Braun & Braun, 1996; Hill, 1992) provides a context for purposeful oral reading (Coody, 1992; Dixon,

Davies, & Politano, 1996; Harrison, 1992). It is an interactive process (Robb, 1994) in which the students are actively involved in responding to and interpreting literature (Post, 1972; Sebesta, 1997). It reinforces the social nature of reading (Busching, 1981; Harrison, 1992; Swanson, 1988) and provides an opportunity for students to work together in a cooperative learning environment (Braun & Braun; Dixon, Davies, & Politano; Hill; Trousdale & Harris, 1993; Wolf, 1992).

Swanson (1988) describes Readers Theatre as being half theatre and half oral interpretation. Sebesta (1992) suggests that the use of Readers Theatre introduces children to the world of oral interpretation. Even though Readers Theatre, as an educational tool, has grown in popularity during the last thirty years (McCaslin, 1984), Gillet and Temple (1986) indicate that the use of Readers Theatre as an instructional reading strategy to develop fluency is virtually unknown to educators.

Groff (1978) indicated that Readers Theatre had been used in classrooms for over thirty years; however, an investigation of the literature disclosed a limited number of empirical research findings. Researchers have documented that participation in Readers Theatre increased reading comprehension when used as a reading strategy (Millin, 1996; Walker, Salverson & French, 1983; Winegarden, 1978). Maberry (1975) found that comprehension of material increased when Readers Theatre was used as a listening strategy to teach literature. Several researchers documented an increased positive attitude toward reading when using Readers Theatre as a reading intervention (Goodman, 1990; Millin; Wolf, 1992). Other investigators determined that specific measures of fluency were increased

when using Readers Theatre as a reading method (Millin; Walker, et al.; Winegarden). Both Maberry and Winegarden concluded that the use of Readers Theatre increased the students' appreciation for literature.

On the other hand, empirical research neglects to provide information concerning the implementation of Readers Theatre as the primary method of reading instruction for an extended period of time in regular classrooms comprised of students with a wide range of reading abilities. Even though Wolf (1992) conducted her research for an entire school year in a self-contained third grade classroom, she provided no quantitative data regarding reading comprehension, reading rate, or reading accuracy. Millin (1996) reported increases in reading comprehension and reading fluency among low achieving second grade students; however, these students received Readers Theatre as supplemental reading instruction outside of their regular classroom. Goodman's (1990) two-week study involved children who were identified as reading below grade level. Walker, Salverson, and French (1983) conducted their research in a university reading clinic that served children with reading difficulties.

In spite of the limited amount of empirical research, Readers Theatre has been endorsed as a reading instruction method for students with a variety of reading disabilities. It has been recommended for "corrective readers" (Gillet & Temple, 1986, p.188), struggling readers (Crisco & Lanasa, 1995; Trousdale & Harris, 1993; Walker, 1992,), readers with disabilities (Braun & Braun, 1996), troubled readers (Dixon, Davies, Politano, 1996), low achieving students (Busching, 1981; Post, 1979; Wolf, 1992), and ESL students (Braun & Braun, 1996).

Readers Theatre has been recommended as an instructional reading strategy in classes that contain children of varying reading abilities (Busching, 1981; Crain & Smith, 1976; Harrison, 1992; Robertson, 1990). Since children of varying abilities can work together on the same script, Readers Theatre is an activity that promotes heterogeneous grouping of students. (Braun & Braun, 1996; Flood, Lapp, Flood, & Nagel, 1992; Swanson, 1988). This is an alternative to homogeneous grouping of students in which students of similar intellectual or achievement abilities work together. Students with poorer reading skills can participate in the same class activity as students with stronger reading skills (Trousdale & Harris, 1993).

Rationale for Present Study

The use of Readers Theatre has been endorsed and recommended for a variety of readers with diverse reading problems. Some have suggested its use to improve oral reading fluency and comprehension. Others have indicated that its use can provide an alternative to ability grouping in a regular classroom with students having a wide range of reading abilities. Its use to promote the social, interactive aspect of reading as well as a cooperative learning environment in the classroom has also been implied. In reality the literature reveals a limited amount of empirical research on the use and effects of Readers Theatre in the regular classroom. Readers Theatre which requires rereading play scripts encompasses many aspects of repeated reading of material. In this instance, the literature reveals a large amount of empirical research. The majority of this research indicates that repeated reading of the text does promote

increases in fluency and comprehension. On the other hand, the implementation and use of this strategy in the classroom is virtually nonexistent.

The use of the basal reader or a combination of the basal reader and supplemental material such as trade books remains the most popular method of teaching reading (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, Wilkinson, 1985; Canney, 1993). In classrooms where the basal reader is used, students identified as weaker readers are frequently given fewer opportunities to participate in the reading of full-length literature. Their oral reading is generally focused on literal understanding of the text rather than reading with expression or with a purpose.

A few findings have demonstrated that Readers Theatre has some value as an instructional method. On the other hand, many findings have demonstrated the effectiveness of repeated readings on improving fluency and comprehension. In spite of research findings, the use of the basal reader remains the most conventional method of teaching reading. Further investigation to determine the impact of Readers Theatre as an instructional method to improve fluency and comprehension is needed. In addition, further investigation is needed to differentiate the role of dramatic reading from simply repeated reading. Recognizing that the basal reader remains the most widely used method of teaching reading, a need to investigate the basal reader's effectiveness on improving fluency and comprehension is apparent.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the use of Readers Theatre to improve reading rate, oral reading accuracy, and the reading comprehension of fifth

grade students in regular classrooms. Differences investigated will include the use of Readers Theatre to improve oral reading rate, oral reading word accuracy and reading comprehension as compared to (a) the use of paired repeated reading in regular classrooms and (b) the use of the basal reader method in regular classrooms. The research could provide insight to the value of using Readers Theatre as an instructional method in a classroom with students having a wide range of reading abilities.

Research Question to be Investigated

The major research question that will be investigated is as follows: Does the implementation of Readers Theatre, as a method of reading instruction, facilitate reading achievement gains in comprehension, oral reading rate, and oral reading word accuracy in fifth grade students when compared to (a) paired repeated reading of the text and (b) the traditional method of teaching reading using a basal reader?

More specifically the following questions will be examined.

1. Did fifth grade students become faster readers when Readers Theatre was used as the method of reading instruction?
2. Did fifth grade students become more accurate readers when Readers Theatre was used as the method of reading instruction?
3. Did fifth grade students demonstrate increased comprehension scores when Readers Theatre was used as the method of reading instruction?

Hypothesis

For the purpose of this investigation, the following hypotheses were tested:

1. There will be no significant difference in the reading rate of fifth grade students who received Readers Theatre as a method of reading instruction for a twelve-week period and those who received paired repeated reading of the text as a method of reading instruction.

2. There will be no significant difference in oral reading accuracy of fifth grade students who received Readers Theatre as a method of reading instruction for a twelve-week period and those who received paired repeated reading of the text as a method of reading instruction.

3. There will be no significant difference in the comprehension scores of fifth grade students who received Readers Theatre as a method of reading instruction for a twelve-week period and those who received paired repeated reading of the text as a method of reading instruction.

4. There will be no significant difference in the reading rate of fifth grade students who received Readers Theatre as a method of reading instruction for a twelve-week period and those who received the traditional form of classroom instruction.

5. There will be no significant difference in oral reading accuracy of fifth grade students who received Readers Theatre as a method of reading instruction for a twelve-week period and those who received the traditional method of classroom instruction.

6. There will be no significant difference in the comprehension scores of fifth grade students who received Readers Theatre as a method of reading instruction for a

twelve-week period and those who received the traditional form of classroom instruction.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following terms were defined:

1. Readers Theatre: (1) “a dramatic reading of a play script where plot development is conveyed through the intonation, inflection, and fluency of oral reading” (Walker, 1992, p. 52); (2) “play reading” (Harrison, 1992, p. 1).

2. Fluency: (1) “freedom from word-identification problems that might hinder comprehension in silent reading or the expression of ideas in oral reading; automaticity” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p.85); (2) “the ability to produce words or larger language units in a limited time interval” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 85).

3. Rate: words per minute calculated by the following formula: number of words in the passage multiplied by 60 and divided by the number of seconds it took to read the passage (Leslie & Caldwell, 1995, p. 59).

4. Oral reading accuracy: the accuracy in reading after accounting for all miscues in oral reading which includes insertions, omissions, substitutions, reversals, repetitions, and aided words calculated by the following formula: number of words in the passage minus the number of miscues (Woods & Moe, 1995).

5. Comprehension: “the reconstruction of the intended meaning of a communication; accurately understanding what is written...”(Harris & Hodges, 1995, pg. 39).

6. Syntax: the rules and patterns found within language which govern the word order in clauses, phrases, and sentences (Harris & Sipay, 1990).
7. Intonation: “the distinctive patterns of pitch that contribute to the meanings of spoken phrases and sentences” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, pg. 122).
8. Stress: the emphasis from increased force of breath which emphasizes a word or group of words (Harris & Hodges, 1995).
9. Pause: a slight interruption of the voice.
10. Phrasing: “a word or group of words framed by pauses” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 187).
11. Miscue: “a deviation from text in oral reading” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 155) which includes omissions, insertions, substitutions, reversals, repetitions, and aided words.
12. Oral interpretation: employing oral presentation or oral performance to study literature (Bacon, 1972).
13. Paired repeated reading: a reading activity in which two students working together, read short passages of the text and evaluate both their own improvement and that of their partner (Blum & Koskinen, 1991).
14. Basal reading program: “a collection of student texts and workbooks, teacher’s manual and supplemental materials for developmental reading and sometimes writing instruction, used chiefly in the elementary and middle school grades” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 18).

15. Supplementary reading: additional reading material used in the basic reading program to provide a variety of reading experiences (Harris & Hodges, 1995).

16. Trade book: a book published for sale to the general public, which is used for reading instruction (Harris & Hodges, 1995).

Summary

Oral reading in the classroom has been encouraged as a means to promote growth in fluency and comprehension. Investigations using repeated readings as an instruction method have provided results that indicate that this method does promote increased fluency and comprehension; however, its use in classrooms is minimal (Hiebert, 1996; Samuels, 1979). Readers Theatre, another instructional method which requires repeated reading of a play script, has been the subject of a limited number of studies. A search of the literature reveals that many authors are of the opinion that Readers Theatre is an effective teaching method and recommend it for readers with diverse reading difficulties and abilities. Recognizing the need for additional research on the effectiveness of Readers Theatre, the study will examine its effects on improving oral reading rate, oral reading word accuracy, and reading comprehension.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The goal of reading is to communicate thoughts and ideas through written language (O'Shea, Sindelar, & O'Shea, 1985). Educators, parents, employers, and politicians continue to voice concern about the poor reading skills demonstrated by both children and adults in this country. In his 1997 State of the Union Address to Congress, President Clinton expressed his views regarding the alarmingly low reading abilities of many fourth graders in the United States. He challenged those in the American educational community to "teach every student to read independently and well by the end of third grade" and encouraged them to strengthen their reading instruction and invest more money in programs that would assure competent reading achievement. In the America Reads Challenge of 1996, President Clinton pledged his support for research and the evaluation of reading programs and materials necessary to improve the reading of children.

Although research continues to investigate the etiology of reading disabilities and effective reading methods, too often teachers in the upper elementary grades express concerns about children who "still can't read." Many reading interventions and methods for readers with or without a disability have been designed and implemented to increase reading fluency and comprehension. These include Readers

Theatre, dramatization of literature, repeated readings, Oral Recitation Lesson, Shared Book Experience, paired reading, and echo reading.

One such instructional method, Readers Theatre, a form of interpretive reading dating back to ancient Greece, has received favorable attention in the literature as a method of teaching reading to school children of all ages. Proponents of Readers Theatre have advocated the use of Readers Theatre in the classroom to improve fluency, comprehension, and reading attitudes (Busching, 1981; Crain & Smith, 1976; Groff, 1978; Harrison, 1992; Hoyt, 1992; Post, 1979; Robertson, 1990; Swanson, 1988). On the other hand, empirical research validating the effects of Readers Theatre as a reading instruction method, with elementary school children is limited (Millin, 1996, Walker, et al., 1983; Wolf, 1992).

The purpose of this literature review is to examine several methods of oral reading and their effectiveness on improving reading fluency and/or comprehension. First, the history and empirical research of Readers Theatre will be reviewed. Second, the history and research in the instruction of oral reading will be reviewed. Third, since Readers Theatre is a multi-faceted technique that consists of components found in other oral reading methods, several methods will be reviewed. These include Shared Book Experience, Oral Recitation Lesson, paired reading, echo reading, and repeated readings. Fourth, research on fluency and comprehension will be reviewed. Finally, the research of using drama in the classroom will be discussed.

Readers Theatre

History of Readers Theatre

Readers Theatre had its inception in fifth-century Greece (Coger & White, 1967) when a recitative art, performed by wandering minstrels known as rhapsodes, emerged (Bahn, 1932). According to Bahn, the rhapsodes, alone or with a partner, read portions of the national epics and other forms of poetry. Occasionally the readings had the accompaniment of a musical instrument and the rhapsodes used their bodies to communicate with their audience. Bahn suggested that when two characters of a poem were read by two different individuals, each assuming the role of one character, the drama began and oral interpretation was chartered.

According to Grimes and Mattingly (1961), a book entitled Chironomia was published in London in 1806. The author, Gilbert Austin, described a form of entertainment in which more than one reader read different parts of a story, play or poem. The author described how the reader dramatically read the material and executed gestures as expressively as possible while he remained seated in a chair. The other participants, seated around a table, were the audience. Austin also stressed that readers put extra effort into their reading in order to keep the interest of the presentation alive. Because no acting was involved, some costumes were allowed to convey the meaning of the performance.

Johnson (1981) offers a more modern version of the formation of Readers Theatre. According to Johnson (1981), in 1950 producer, Paul Gregory, and British actor, Charles Laughton, presented an oral interpretation program, An Armful of

Books, in several Canadian provinces. The success of this tour bolstered Laughton's interest in continuing to perform oral interpretation programs. When he questioned Gregory about future performances, Gregory responded by describing an experience he had in New York City.

Gregory explained that while walking in New York City he stopped to view four diamonds in the window display at Tiffany Jewelers. The diamonds, mounted on miniature black bar stools, were against a backdrop of black velvet. Gregory described this arrangement as so intensely beautiful that nothing else was needed to highlight the brilliance of the diamonds.

At that point, Gregory revealed to Laughton how the image of these diamonds led him to develop the framework for a presentation involving four performers. He described how four actors, dressed in formal attire, seated on stools on a bare stage, would engage in a lively, spirited dialogue. He envisioned and hoped to enlist some of the most accomplished actors and actresses to perform electrifying material.

In 1951, Charles Laughton, Sir Fredrick Hardwicke, Charles Boyer, and Agnes Moorehead helped Gregory fulfill his dream. These four professionals presented the historic production of George Bernard Shaw's, Don Juan in Hell, at Claremont College in Southern California. This presentation is considered to be the seminal work in the development of Readers Theatre in the United States (Johnson, 1981).

According to Coger and White (1967), in 1952, Charles Laughton directed the presentation of Stephen Vincent Benet's long narrative poem, John Brown's

Body. Raymond Massey, Judith Anderson, and Tyrone Power read the various roles.

A chorus of twenty was used to resemble the music and dramatic action used in Greek drama. Because a railing was used to depict a fence, this presentation deviated from the traditional Readers Theatre format which was free of props or sets.

Readers Theatre had a very successful run on Broadway (Johnson, 1981). Theatre critics described this unorthodox theatre form as being very stimulating and illuminating. Through the years, many different genres of literature have been performed as Readers Theatre, and the more traditional aspects of theatre, such as costumes and props, have been included in the productions. According to Adams (1999) the following productions have been on Broadway. In the 1950s performances included "I Knock at the Door" and "Under Milkwood". In the 1960's performances included "The World of Carl Sandburg", "A Thurber Carnival", "Brecht on Brecht", and "Spoon River Anthology". A Readers Theatre production of the "The Grapes of Wrath" was first performed in the 1970s, and a revival of the play received the Tony Award in 1990. Other more recent productions include a "Travels With My Aunt", "Love Letters", "A Woman In Black", and "The Kentucky Cycle" which received a Tony nomination in 1994.

As this entertainment form grew in popularity, Readers Theatre productions began to surface on college campuses and in secondary schools across the country. According to Bennett (1972), by the early 1970s one-fifth of all theatrical productions on American college campuses were performed in Readers Theatre format. Some colleges and universities offered courses in Readers Theatre while

others included Readers Theatre content in Oral Interpretation classes (Coger & White, 1967). At the secondary level, the American Educational Theatre Association suggested that Readers Theatre, as a course of study, provided an opportunity for students to study literature, develop better speech habits, and participate in self-expressive activities before an audience (Coger & White).

A presentation of Roald Dahl's James and the Giant Peach at the 1965 American Educational Theatre Association convention, sparked an interest among educators and theatrical professionals to adapt materials for children's Readers Theatre performances (White, 1982). High school and college students as well as theatre group personnel arranged performances for younger children. In the late 1970s several touring companies were established and provided Readers Theatre performances in many elementary schools in the United States (White).

Shortly thereafter, according to White (1982), elementary school teachers began using Readers Theatre in their classrooms. Students read and performed the text in classrooms, at school assemblies, or for parent organizations. These Readers Theatre programs included group readings of various forms of literature including stories, plays, and poetry (White).

In 1972, Robert Post encouraged elementary school teachers to use Readers Theatre as a reading method to enhance appreciation of literature and develop reading comprehension. Post argued that oral reading enabled young readers to understand the literary elements of the text. He stressed that the reading materials should be of interest to the child and should be appropriate for the student's reading

ability. According to Post, the performance of literature provided an opportunity for the student to become involved with the emotional content of the text. It also enabled the student to have a clearer understanding and greater appreciation of the aesthetic elements of literature.

In 1974-1975, two educators, Crain and Smith (1976), working with the Readers Theatre Institute at San Diego State University, introduced Readers Theatre to approximately 2,000 teachers in California. Crain and Smith emphasized that Educational Readers Theatre in the elementary school differed from the art and entertainment form known in higher levels of education. According to Crain and Smith, the use of Readers Theatre as a teaching device encouraged children to become actively involved in literature. In their opinion, the use of Readers Theatre established in children an enthusiastic attitude toward reading, improved reading and oral interpretation skills, and promoted positive peer interrelationships.

Readers Theatre, as a reading strategy, began to appear in language arts textbooks in the 1980s and continued through the 1990s. Several authors suggested that when used as a reading strategy, Readers Theatre promoted comprehension (Graves, Watts, & Graves, 1994; Heilman, Blair, & Rupley, 1994), developed an understanding and appreciation of literature (Johnson & Louis, 1990; Post, 1974; Robb, 1994; Sloane, 1977), provided a purposeful oral reading activity (McCaslin, 1984; Norton, 1997), and improved fluency (Gillet & Temple, 1986; Hennings, 1997; Moffet & Wagner, 1992). In Becoming A Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading, Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) indicated

play readings contributed to the development of oral reading skills and aided in keeping oral traditions alive.

Readers Theatre Research

Although articles promoting the use of Readers Theatre in the classroom appeared in the literature prior to 1990, the majority of those were not the result of empirical research. Since 1975, a few researchers have conducted investigations of Readers Theatre in an academic setting (Goodman, 1990; Maberry, 1975; Millin, 1996; Walker, Salverson & French, 1983; Winegarden, 1978; Wolf, 1992).

According to Maberry (1975), the basic purpose of his investigation was to compare a traditional method of teaching literature (silent reading) with listening to two oral interpretation methods (solo performance and Readers Theatre). His subjects included 371 high school English students in grades nine and eleven from three different high schools in Texas. Grade level classes in each high school were exposed to the same scripts. Graduate students from a local university performed the oral readings. Immediately after reading or hearing the material the students were tested to determine which method of instruction provided the highest scores in both comprehension of the material and in appreciation of the literature presented. Maberry's results indicated that a Readers Theatre presentation evoked the greatest mean on both the achievement and appreciation tests. Ten days following the original experiment, the students were administered the same test to determine the retention of material presented. Again, the Readers Theatre presentation evoked the greatest mean on both comprehension of material and appreciation of literature.

Maberry concluded that the technique rather than the literature yielded greater results.

Maberry's sample size was large; however, his initial experiment was completed in six days. The students were exposed to each of the three techniques only three times. Maberry did determine the retention effects of Readers Theatre on comprehension by testing the students ten days following the conclusion of the initial experiment. Maberry's study provided persuasive results for the possibilities for students as recipients of instead of participants in Readers Theatre.

Winegarden (1978), using Dunkin and Biddle's criteria (1974), examined four research studies, including Maberry's (1975), for verification of the claims they made regarding Readers Theatre as an effective educational tool. After analyzing the data, Winegarden indicated that Readers Theatre, as an educational tool, did improve fluency, increase comprehension, improve oral communication, increase motivation to read, and develop a greater appreciation for literature. He also concluded that children benefited from group interaction and demonstrated an improvement in self-confidence.

According to Winegarden, some of the evidence reported in these studies was tentative and weak. On the one hand Winegarden endorsed the use of Readers Theatre. On the other hand, he indicated that the concept of Readers Theatre itself was unclear and lacked an explicit definition. He indicated some of the research designs were informal and easily contaminated with variables such as teacher enthusiasm, the role of drama, group interaction, and the content of literature. As

Winegarden indicates, the suggestions of increased self-esteem and self-confidence are strong in some of the studies he researched; however, quantitative statistical data was lacking.

Walker, Salverson, and French (1983), in a reading clinic for children experiencing reading difficulties, compared the effects of different reading intervention strategies. Each student received approximately twenty hours of one-on-one tutoring while attending the clinic. Some of the interventions utilized were repeated readings, play readings (Readers Theatre), cloze method, timed readings, flash cards, language experience, and Neurological Impress Method. Concerns analyzed were comprehension, reading rate, decoding, word recognition, fluency, and syntax use. Play reading provided gains in rate, fluency, word recognition, syntax use, and decoding; however, repeated readings provided greater gains than play reading. Play reading (Readers Theatre) demonstrated its greatest gain score in comprehension. Repeated reading gains in comprehension were not reported.

Goodman (1990) compared Readers Theatre to the conventional reading method and examined effects of each method on reading comprehension and reading attitudes. Goodman further examined the effects of receiving either type of reading instruction in the morning as compared to receiving instruction in the afternoon. His research was conducted for a two-week period in California and included 102 seventh and eight grades students who were identified as reading below grade level.

Goodman found that there was no significant difference in comprehension scores when the two methods were compared. However, he determined that there was a

significant difference between the attitudes toward reading of the two groups. In both methods, the afternoon groups scored higher than the morning groups. Goodman concluded that the students in the Readers Theatre groups enjoyed the units more, expressed a desire to study other assignments using Readers Theatre format, and enjoyed the specific unit more than those students in the conventional groups.

Goodman's experiment was brief, lasting two weeks. During this time the students read one story and answered questions on a publisher's test, which accompanied the reading series. The unique and novel nature of Readers Theatre, performed for a brief period of time, could have influenced the students' attitudes toward reading.

In 1992, Wolf conducted a year-long qualitative study as an active participant in an urban school in California. Seventeen third and fourth grade children, designated as remedial readers, participated in this study. Wolf provided an acting coach to assist with the theatrical aspects of Readers Theater, materials for costumes, set designs, and props.

As the students dramatized literacy texts, Wolf analyzed their gestures, movements, affective interpretations, and language. The children were involved in designing their sets and costumes, writing and performing the scripts, and planning their performances. Wolf (1994) suggested the use of Readers Theatre as an alternative form of reading instruction which provided these students an opportunity to comprehend and interpret the text through reading, negotiating, gesturing, making

decisions and creating episodes. Prior to this project, these students shared a dislike for reading; however, at the end of the year they had a greater appreciation for specific pieces of children's literature and enjoyed a sense of accomplishment while engaged in a reading activity.

Although Wolf states that the students improvised and performed the text through Readers Theatre, they were actually participating in a form of creative drama or improvisational drama. In this experiment the students performed a piece of children's literature through acting rather than reading. This experiment was carried out with the assistance of a classroom teacher, an acting coach and the primary researcher. An unlimited amount of material resources were available for costumes, sets, props, and make-up; however, these elements of a theatrical performance are rarely part of a Readers Theatre performance.

Wolf indicates that the children's attitudes toward reading, sense of pride and accomplishment, decision making skills, and reading skills improved as a result of this experiment. She did not provide any quantitative data analysis to support these observations. Since these students were part of a unique, special group, the results Wolf observed may have been the result of the "Hawthorne effect." Again this study consisted of a small sample size.

Millin's (1996) investigation involved twenty-seven second graders who qualified for Title 1 services in a public school in a community in southwestern Pennsylvania. Millin compared the effects of Readers Theatre with the traditional method of remedial instruction that included completing worksheets, reviewing

phonics, vocabulary and comprehension skills and playing games to teach or reinforce reading. Using Readers Theatre, a reading specialist provided supplemental reading instruction to the experimental group. Each group met in a “pull-out” setting, forty minutes daily, five days a week. At the end of the nine-week period those students in the experimental group read more fluently, used longer and more appropriate phrases, and read faster and more accurately than those in the control group. Millin used the Qualitative Reading Inventory (Leslie & Caldwell, 1990), to verify that students receiving Readers Theatre instruction achieved higher comprehension gains than those in the control group. Using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990), Millin also concluded positive reading attitude changes in those students were prompted by the use of Readers Theatre as an instructional tool.

Millin’s experiment was conducted in a “pull-out” program, and the sample size was small. Her experiment spanned one marking period. Millin’s experimental group read scripts written from very familiar children’s stories including The Three Little Pigs, The Three Billy Goats Gruff, and Goldilocks and the Three Bears. It is apparent children in second grade would have strong prior knowledge concerning the comprehension questions asked after reading the scripts. Examples of questions are: (a) What did Goldilocks think was wrong with Papa’s chair? and (b) What did the first little pig use to build his house? Reading instruction for students in the control group consisted of completing worksheets that concentrated on phonics, vocabulary and comprehension knowledge.

Oral Reading

Historical Background

According to Bacon (1972), throughout the Middle Ages, oral reading was more prevalent than silent reading. In Confessions, St. Augustine (346/1991) wrote he was perplexed by St. Ambrose's peculiar habit of reading silently. St. Ambrose, unlike the other monks who read orally, read with his eyes and heart while his tongue and mouth remained silent.

The early American colonists practiced oral reading. Prayers or oral readings from the Bible or the primer were both a religious custom and method of reading instruction (Venezky, 1987). Oral performance and rote memorization were the focus of instruction for colonial children (Venezky).

According to Venezky (1987) the development of eloquent oral reading was one of the central goals of reading instruction in America for almost 250 years. Prior to the American Revolution training in elocution was deemed necessary for those preparing for the ministry or law; however, after the Revolution, training was necessary for those preparing for politics or education. In 1856, The Progressive Fifth, or Elocutionary Reader, a reading textbook by Town and Halbrook, indicated elocutionary principles were required for those seeking a profession as a minister, military leader, actor, politician, or lecturer (Venezky). At the end of the Civil War, elocution instruction was no longer popular and had vanished from the reading textbooks by the end of the nineteenth century.

Oral reading instruction in the classroom remained in vogue until the early 1920s. At that time general changes in American society brought about a shift to silent reading instruction. As the country moved from being a rural society to an urban society, the people's needs for literacy increased in both their occupational and private lives (Venezky, 1984). The advances in the production of paper and in high volume printing techniques provided a notable increase in the availability and quantity of reading materials (Venezky).

During that time, the demands of the new society required rapid silent reading (Venezky, 1984). Teachers, having been trained to teach oral reading, were unprepared to teach silent reading (Allington, 1984b). In the 1920s, several textbooks that emphasized silent reading were published. For the next thirty years, the merit and purpose of oral reading was questioned and an emphasis was placed on silent reading (Venezky, 1984).

In the early 1950s the need for balanced instruction, including both oral and silent reading, was recognized and accepted by most educators (Allington, 1984b). In the late 1950s and early 1960s, greater emphasis was placed on oral reading than on silent reading in the early elementary grades (Austin & Morrison, 1963). On the other hand, silent reading was emphasized over oral reading in the middle and upper elementary grades.

Oral Reading Instruction Research

Allington (1984b) reviewed research on using oral reading instruction to improve students' reading growth and achievement. He concluded that research on

the use of round-robin reading with different instructional focuses (e.g. absolute accuracy, fluency training, self-correction training) yielded different results.

Allington raised concerns about the actual use of these instructional foci as well as the final effects on reader development.

Oral reading has been determined to be more closely related to reading achievement gains than silent reading (Stallings, 1980). Wilkinson, Wardrop, and Anderson (1988) reanalyzed the study by Leinhardt, Zigmond, and Cooley (1981), and, in contrast to the original study, hypothesized oral reading instruction has an effect on final reading achievement. Oral reading, as compared to silent reading, promoted greater comprehension scores in low-achieving readers (Miller & Smith, 1990).

The traditional method of round-robin or turn-taking reading continued to be the most prevalent form of oral reading practice in the classrooms (Allington, 1984b; Hoffman & Clements, 1984; McDermott, 1977); however, little research has been done to determine the effects of using this method in the classroom (Hoffman, 1987). According to McDermott, poorer readers were given fewer opportunities to read orally. Allington (1980b) determined low-ability readers were interrupted more frequently than high-ability readers during oral reading activities. According to Allington, teacher comments to poorer readers pertain to the graphemic or phonetic characteristics of the word. In contrast, comments to good readers usually pertain to syntactic and semantic information. A study by Hoffman and Clements (1984) revealed poorer readers received fewer quality interactions with the teacher and fewer

opportunities to achieve task success during oral reading activities. Poorer readers also received less contact and engaged time with the teacher.

Reutzel, Hollingsworth, and Eldredge (1994) identified ten characteristics of effective oral reading instruction. These included: (a) repetition of segments of or the whole text; (b) modeling or demonstration by the teacher, peer, or mechanical device; (c) direct instruction or explanation including the whole class, small groups or individuals; (d) feedback, focused on fluency or comprehension, given to the group or individual; (e) support given to the whole group or individuals by the teacher or peers with or without a mechanical device; (f) phrasing practice for fluency through direct or indirect instruction; (g) easy to read, predictable materials; (h) apparent purpose of fluency or comprehension development; (i) active engagement of learners in either a supportive/corrective or supportive/demonstrative experience; and (j) development of reading skills (comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and decoding). On the basis of these ten characteristics, practical and theoretical contrasts between the individual oral reading instruction methods can be determined.

Other classroom oral reading activities have been investigated for their effectiveness in reading achievement and reading development. They include the Oral Recitation Lesson (Hoffman, 1987; Reutzel, Hollingsworth & Eldredge, 1994), the Shared Book Experience (Holdaway, 1981; Ribowsky, 1985), paired reading (Koskinen & Blum, 1986; Morgan, 1976; Topping, 1987b), Readers Theatre

(Winegarden, 1978) and repeated readings (Dowhower, 1987; Gonzales & Elijah, 1975; Samuels, 1979).

Shared Book Experience

Holdaway's (1981) Shared Book Experience emerged from the whole language philosophy and contends that children acquire reading skills through the same language-learning process through which they acquire oral language competence. Holdaway believed children benefited from a read-aloud activity because they were able to: (a) see the print, (b) receive support and guidance through the print, and (3) participate in the oral reading. In order to provide children with this shared reading activity, big books, books large enough so that all children could see the print and participate in reading it, were developed.

Ribowsky (1985) compared the effects of the Shared Book Experience to a traditional code emphasis program in two intact kindergarten classrooms. His results indicated a significant difference, favoring the Shared Book Experience, on reading achievement. The effects of the Shared Book Experience on vocabulary, fluency, comprehension and word analysis remain untested.

Oral Recitation Lesson

Hoffman's (1987) Oral Recitation Lesson stems from the interactive-skills theories of the reading process. These theories emphasize that the reader constructs meaning by interacting with the author through the text. Hoffman stated that certain elements of his procedure are similar to the language experience approach.

Oral recitation procedure. Hoffman (1987) developed this instructional procedure that utilizes a basal reader and consists of two basic components plus a series of subroutines. The first component is direct instruction and involves three subroutines that include the comprehension phase, the practice phase, and the performance phase.

In the comprehension phase the teacher reads the story to the students and conducts an analysis of the story content, including characters, setting, goals, events, and resolutions. The students participate in numerous comprehension strategies including story mapping, identifying key elements, and summarizing.

In the practice phase the teacher works directly with the students while they read aloud independently or in chorus. The teacher works with the students directly and models fluent reading. The teacher supports the students and encourages them to read with expression using pitch, stress, and juncture. The length of the reading is gradually increased from one or two sentences to an entire page or longer.

In the performance phase the student selects a portion of the text and reads to other members of the class. At the conclusion of the reading, the classmates and teacher provide positive feedback to the reader.

The indirect instruction component applies to the student's mastery of several factors. The student practices reading their passages softly for ten minutes every day until a minimum level proficiency on word accuracy, speed, and expression can be demonstrated. Once this is achieved the student moves on to the next story.

Oral recitation research. Hoffman (1987) conducted research in regular second grade classrooms over a two-year period and concluded that the implementation of the Oral Recitation Lesson afforded low-ability readers the same instruction as high-ability readers. His study concluded that students, who had previously demonstrated little growth in reading, made gains that were statistically significant.

Hoffman and Isaacs (1991) reported the effects of the Oral Recitation Lesson on first and second grade students. Even though the students achieved significant gains in reading rate, a statistical significance between the treatment group and control group was not determined.

In a year-long study, Morris and Nelson (1992) studied a variation of the Oral Recitation Lesson with low-ability second grade readers in a large urban district. Results on the *Diagnostic Reading Scale* (Spache, 1981) suggested substantial gains in word recognition accuracy in both word list and context reading for children who previously demonstrated little or no progress in reading. In contrast, results on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills*, the standardized test administered throughout the district, revealed no significant gains.

Paired Reading

Paired reading is a form of peer tutoring. In this cooperative learning activity neither person is an official teacher; however, one partner is a better reader, generally an older student, sibling, or parent. During the past twenty years several variations of

paired reading have appeared in the literature (Koskinen & Blum, 1986; Miller, 1987; Morgan, 1976; Topping, 1987a).

Paired reading procedures. Morgan (1976) advocated a pair of readers read a book together with the tutor reading slightly behind the tutee. When the tutee mispronounced or was unable to pronounce a word, the tutor provided assistance and they resumed reading together.

Koskinen and Blum (1986) developed a method of paired repeated reading that utilizes reading partners or reading buddies in a classroom setting. With this method, each partner reads a passage of about fifty words, silently, one time. Then one student reads the passage aloud three times. The partner listens, evaluates the partner's reading, and shares this information with the reader. The partners then switch roles. The activity typically lasts ten to fifteen minutes and is generally included in the reading instruction time.

Topping's (1987a) Paired Reading technique emerged from a growing concern in Great Britain for involving parents in the literacy development of their children. Parents, especially those living in economically disadvantaged areas, were encouraged to listen to their children read. The intent of Topping's (1987a) method was to maximize the child's existing knowledge of word attack skills.

Topping's (1987a) procedure includes a parent or parent figure and a child working together. The parent and child begin reading simultaneously from the same text. When the child signals the parent with a gentle tap or nudge, the parent stops reading and the child continues. The child reads until he mispronounces or is unable

to pronounce a word. At this time the parent reads the troublesome word and the pair continues reading until the child signals. The parent's praise of the child's reading is very important throughout the session. Children and parents contract the amount of time they will read everyday, which was generally five minutes daily, five days a week.

Paired reading research. Paired reading activities, both in or out of the school setting, have provided favorable results (Koskinen & Blum, 1984; Miller, 1987; Rhodes, 1993; Topping, 1987b). According to Koskinen and Blum, children using the paired repeated reading method demonstrated improvement in reading fluency, comprehension, and word recognition. Topping also reported gains in fluency and comprehension. Using a model similar to Koskinen and Blum (1984), Stevens, Madden, Slavin and Farnish (1987) found that students in the experimental groups outperformed students in the control groups on standardized reading tests, analyses of writing samples, and oral reading performance indicators.

Surveys conducted by Topping (1987b) indicated that parents felt their children were reading more accurately, more fluently, and more enthusiastically. Surveys revealed a large majority of the children felt they were better, more competent readers. The children indicated that reading had become easier for them and they enjoyed reading with their parents.

Repeated Readings

Repeated readings were a common practice in the early 1600s in America. The colonists orally repeated memorized prayers, psalms, or Bible passages while

looking at the text. Beginning readers, hoping to learn new words, listened and followed the text as the more skilled readers repeatedly read passages (Samuels, 1996).

At the turn of the century, Huey (1908/1968) described the repeated reading method. According to Huey, practice reduced the amount of time a reader spent on details, word recognition and concentration; therefore, reading became a simpler, easier task. Huey observed reading patterns of children in the United States and the Orient and indicated they became more fluent readers with repeated reading of the text.

Theory of automatic processing in reading. Current teaching implications of the repeated reading method emerged from the theory of automatic processing in reading (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). The automaticity theory acknowledged that a fluent reader decodes words automatically and focuses attention on comprehending the text (Samuels, 1979). Since beginning readers place so much attention on decoding the words, their attention is not immediately available to gain meaning from the text. Samuels compared reading to active participation in a sport or playing a musical instrument. Samuels noted that the athlete must act quickly and automatically in order to perform certain skills or tasks and the musician must automatically demonstrate knowledge of the notes in order to perform with feeling and expression. The reader, like the athlete and musician, must be able to master small units or skills quickly before moving on to more complex or complete tasks.

The components of reading that researchers of the repeated readings procedure generally concern themselves with are fluency and comprehension. Accuracy of word recognition and speed are the two primary factors in oral reading. Samuels (1979) emphasized speed over accuracy to allow the student to move on to a new passage without being fearful of making a mistake, possibly causing the reading rate to decrease.

Comprehension is achieved when the reader understands what is written. Comprehension can be a slow and labored process when readers use small units to recognize words (Samuels, 1987). When a reader recognizes larger units of a word, meaning can be brought to the text. Once this occurs the reader uses other processes, such as personal or previous experiences, to understand the material (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974).

Repeated readings research. In the latter part of the 1970s, Gonzales and Elijah (1975), Chomsky (1976), and Samuels (1979) were the first to investigate the effects of repeated reading on word accuracy, fluency and comprehension. Gonzales and Elijah revealed that the number of word recognition errors was reduced with oral rereading of passages. Chomsky indicated that children experienced improved comprehension and fluency when they followed the text while listening to tape-recorded stories for an unlimited number of times. According to Samuels, students with a mental handicap experienced increased fluency through repeated readings of material.

Samuels (1979) described the repeated reading procedure in the following manner. The student read an instructional level passage containing 50 to 200 words. Upon completion of the passage, the reader was given feedback concerning word recognition errors and reading rate and the results were plotted on a graph. The reader then reread the material until the predetermined criterion for speed and accuracy was achieved, at which time the reader read a new passage.

Some concern about students becoming bored with this process or losing interest and motivation in reading was expressed by Rasinski (1990a). On the other hand, according to Rashotte and Torgesen (1985), students wanted to continue the repeated reading procedure even though the study had come to a conclusion. Chomsky (1976) indicated that students, exposed to this procedure, generally experienced a feeling of success which stemmed from having increased their reading speed, accuracy, and comprehension.

Significant gains were observed in reading rate, word recognition and accuracy (Chomsky, 1976; Dowhower, 1987; Gonzales & Elijah, 1975; Herman, 1986; Moyer, 1982; Rashotte & Torgesen, 1985; Rasinski, 1990b; Samuels, 1979). A variety of learners in various settings became more fluent readers through repeated reading practice. Results from several experiments indicate increased reading fluency in students with learning disabilities (Rashotte & Torgesen, 1985; Sindelar, Monda, & O'Shea, 1990), students with a mental handicap (Samuels, 1979), students who read below grade level (Carver & Hoffman, 1981; Chomsky, 1976; Gonzales & Elijah, 1975; Herman, 1986), students who are normal achievers (Dowhower, 1987;

O'Shea, et. al., 1985; Rasinski, 1990a), and a person suffering from post surgery acquired alexia without agraphia (Moyer, 1982). Herman (1986) and Rashotte and Torgesen (1985) demonstrated that children with low reading abilities achieve the greatest gains. High-achieving students also benefit from this procedure; however, their gains are not as pronounced as those of low-achieving students (Herman, 1986; Taylor, Wade, & Yekovich, 1985).

Three investigations have been conducted on the effects of audio-assisted repeated readings (Chomsky, 1976; Dowhower, 1987; Rasinski, 1990a). The students listened to the story while reading along from the text. Chomsky found that once the students had achieved a certain comfort level with the text, they proceeded with the unassisted procedure. Rasinski found no significant difference for reading speed or reading accuracy between unassisted or audio-assisted repeated readings; however, Dowhower (p.403) concluded "prosodic indication slightly favored the read-along method while there were few differences between the two procedures in gains in reading rate, accuracy, and comprehension."

Using a variation of Samuel's (1979) procedure, O'Shea, Sindelar, and O'Shea (1985) determined that students' comprehension scores improved as the number of repeated readings increased from one to three repeated readings. However, their comprehension scores did not improve significantly when the number of repeated readings increased from three to seven repeated readings. Sindelar, Monda, and O'Shea (1990) used a similar method and achieved the same results. Stoddard, Valcante, Sindelar, O'Shea, and Algozzine (1993) also determined that

fluency and comprehension peaked after the third rereading and that the use of segmented sentence and intonation cues neglected to increase rate or comprehension. Graduate students achieved the greatest gains in comprehension and retention after two repeated readings (Amlund, Kardash, & Kulhavy, 1985).

Computers were used to generate the text display in two separate studies (Carver & Hoffman, 1981; Rashotte & Torgesen, 1985). Carver and Hoffman found that remedial readers made gains in fluency and these gains transferred to new material when the tasks were similar. Rashotte and Torgesen found that unless a large number of overlapping words were present in the passages, students with learning disabilities demonstrated no significant difference in a broad range of reading skills between repeated readings and a comparable amount of traditional reading time that does not require repeated readings.

During the last twenty years there has been a considerable amount of research on the effects of repeated readings on fluency and comprehension. Through the years researchers modified Samuels' (1979) original procedure to fit the needs and purpose of their individual studies, engaged a large variety of subjects, and generally achieved favorable results.

Echo Reading

Fluency is the goal of echo reading (Anderson, 1981). The teacher models oral reading by reading one sentence from a short passage for the students. The students, reading in unison, immediately attempt to imitate what the teacher read giving special attention to intonation, phrasing (Walker, 1988), inflection

(Schneeberg, 1977), and word identification (Anderson). As the students become more fluent, the teacher models reading two or more sentences and the students immediately imitate the teacher's reading. Echo reading can be used in conjunction with repeated reading especially when reading troublesome sentences (Gipe, 1995).

Another method of echo reading involves listening to taped books while reading (Carbo, 1978; Chomsky, 1976; Schneeberg, 1977). Chomsky's study revealed increased scores in comprehension, oral reading rate and word recognition for third grade students reading below grade level. Carbo's research indicated increased word recognition scores for sixth grade students with a learning disability. Schneeberg's four year study, in inner-city schools, demonstrated improvement in vocabulary and reading comprehension scores.

Fluency

Fluency is defined as the ease or naturalness of reading (White, 1995). Two elements of fluency include word recognition and accuracy and reading rate (Hoffman & Isaacs, 1991; Lipson & Lang, 1991). Other aspects of fluency include: (a) adhering to the author's syntax; (b) using expression to signify feelings, anticipation, or characterization; and (c) phrasing words through the use of intonation, stress, and pitch (White).

Reading fluency has been identified as a crucial element in reading development and achievement (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Chall, 1983; Huey, 1908/1968; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). Allington (1983) deemed

fluency the most neglected goal in reading instruction and research. According to Anderson (1981) fluency was the missing ingredient in reading instruction. Hiebert (1983) and Allington (1984a) concluded that classroom observations revealed that fluency was not addressed in classroom reading instruction. In spite of this neglect, researchers have demonstrated the importance of reading fluency in the literacy spectrum (Adams, 1990; Hoffman, 1987; Koskinen & Blum, 1984; Rasinski, 1990b; Samuels, 1979; Schreiber, 1980).

Most researchers investigated the use of special procedures or methods to improve reading fluency. They identified fluency instruction as a supplementary method in which the participants were removed from their regular classroom to receive fluency instruction in isolation (Chomsky, 1976; Dowhower, 1987; Herman, 1986; Stoddard, et. al., 1993). A review of the literature reveals several researchers advocated and provided a plan for whole class instruction (Dowhower, 1989; Mathes, Simmons, & Davis, 1992; Morris & Nelson, 1992; Samuels, 1979); however, few studies have documented the feasibility and/or results of whole class instruction (Holdaway, 1981; Koskinen & Blum, 1986; Rasinski, Padak, Linek & Sturtevant, 1992; Reutzel, Hollingsworth, & Eldredge, 1994). Some researchers have warned that implementation of some of these programs can be labor intensive for the teacher (Rasinski & Zutell, 1990) and others recommend additional adult assistance in the classroom (Mathes, Simmons, & Davis). Others indicate the repetitious nature of some of the programs may cause student boredom and disinterest (Rasinski, 1990b; Rhodes, 1993).

Instructional objectives to develop or intensify reading fluency are absent in most reading textbooks; however, objectives to teach reading skills are present (Venezky, 1987; Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). Teachers are rarely given instruction on how to teach fluency (Lipson & Lang, 1991; Rasinski, 1990b).

Rasinski (1989) identified six components of reading fluency instruction. These include: (a) repeated reading of the text; (b) support for the student during reading (e.g. reading-while-listening, choral reading, and simultaneous reading); (c) modeling fluent reading; (d) direct instruction and feedback (e.g. paired reading); (e) marked phrase boundaries in the text; and (f) easy to read materials that allow the student to go beyond decoding to reading with expression. According to Rasinski, in order to insure fluency reading practice, one or two of these principles should be incorporated in the daily reading lesson.

Even though differences among individuals occur naturally, there are several factors inherent in fluency development. One of the most important factors is one's exposure to print and how effective that exposure is developed through practice (Allington, 1977; Nathan & Stanovitch, 1991). Through practice the reader develops automaticity in decoding and this enables the reader to focus attention on comprehension (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974).

Schreiber (1980) agrees that repeated reading and similar methods are effective in the development of fluency. He indicates that prosodic features, including intonation, stress, and duration, are important signals of the syntactic structure of the spoken language; however, the written language fails to provide the

reader with graphic markings indicating the syntactic units. Reading fluency is achieved when a reader is able to compensate for the absence of prosodic cues. He suggests that hearing a fluent reader produce the appropriate phrasing of sentences in a passage enables the beginning reader to impose the phrasing while reading. With a great deal of practice readers are able to identify the appropriate prosodic patterns in the reading material and transfer these prosodic skills to new passages.

Differences in the amount of reading practice children receive is also a factor. Stanovitch (1986) reported the Matthew effect of reading and explained how societal and school practices created an enormous difference in the amount of time children practiced reading. Allington (1980a; 1984a) and McDermott (1977) indicated that poor readers are given fewer opportunities to read than more able readers. Hoffman and Clements (1984) indicated that readers with poor reading skills were given less contact time with the teacher than those with better reading skills.

Anderson, Wilson and Fielding (1988) reported how differences in the volume of reading outside of the school setting are linked to reading fluency. They concluded a child in the 50th percentile reads six times as much as the child in the 20th percentile and a child in the 80th percentile reads twenty times as much as a child in the 20th percentile. In one year, a vast difference of exposure to more than two million words existed between the child reading at the 90th percentile and the child reading at the 10th percentile.

Researchers employing various methods or procedures have hypothesized a relationship between reading fluency and comprehension; however, how they are

linked remains unclear (Dowhower, 1987). Rasinski (1990b) reported a low-moderate to moderately strong correlation between fluency measures and two of three comprehension measures. Shinn, Knutson, Good, Tilly and Collins (1992) reported that Curriculum Based Measurement of oral reading fluency was a good index of comprehension for third and fifth grade students. Investigating the effects of the Oral Recitation Lesson, Reutzel and Hollingsworth (1993), reported a strong correlation between fluency training and comprehension as compared to round robin reading among second grade student. Ribowsky (1985) reported a statistical difference, favoring the Shared Book Experience instead of a code emphasis approach, on measures of fluency and reading achievement among kindergarten children. A variety of repeated reading strategies have been reported to increase fluency and improve comprehension (Dowhower, 1987; O'Shea, Sindelar & O'Shea, 1985; Samuels, 1979; Taylor, Wade, and Yekovich, 1985).

Comprehension

According to Venezky (1984) the first study on reading comprehension was conducted in 1884 by Romanes. In his book, Mental Evolution in Animals, Romanes reported that to fully understand the material it should be read twice (Robinson, Faraone, Hittleman & Unruh, 1990). He also indicated that the more rapid readers remembered the most information (Venezky).

Prior to the 1950s the term "reading comprehension" was seldom found in the literature (Venezky, 1984). The 1957 launching of Sputnik prompted American

educators to upgrade their traditional curricula. In 1965, Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which appropriated large sums of money for reading instruction and reading research (Robinson, et. al., 1990). Later, the emergence of cognitive psychology in the 1970s, prompted educators, cognitive psychologists, linguists, and psycholinguists to question comprehension interaction (Pearson & Fielding, 1991). The Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois was formed in the 1970s with its purpose being to study reading comprehension.

Harris and Sipay (1990) reported that more research was done on reading comprehension from 1978 to 1982 than during any comparable period in history. This research explosion continues today with results transforming reading instruction practices (Fielding & Pearson, 1994).

Harris and Hodges (1995) define comprehension as the ability to “accurately understand what is written or said” (p. 36). According to Ruddell and Unrau (1994), the reader constructs meaning by interacting with the text. This interaction recognizes the reader’s role of using prior knowledge and previous experiences, text information, the reader’s stance with the text, communication, and social interactions to construct meaning.

Schema theory is a concept directly related to the interactive view of reading comprehension. Anderson (1994) explains that the reader’s schema provides an organized integration of knowledge and experiences and allows comprehension, learning and remembering of what is read. Schema theorists suggest that everything

a person experiences or learns is stored in the brain in slots or categories called schemata (Rumelhart, 1980). These incomplete schemata are constantly being enlarged, restructured, and adjusted as new information is acquired (Rumelhart, Lindsay, & Norman, 1972).

Durkin (1981) suggested that schemata were a hierarchically arranged network of concepts. The reading process involves the simultaneous activation of different levels that include word-encoding, lexical-access, parsing and text-integration stages (Just & Carpenter, 1980; Samuels & Eisenberg, 1981). The processes can be either data driven (bottom-up) or hypothesis (top-down) driven. Anderson and Pichert (1978) proposed six functions of schemata. These functions are to provide idea scaffolding, facilitate selective memory, facilitate editing and summarizing, allow orderly searches of memory, facilitate editing and summarizing, and permit inferential reconstruction.

Pearson and Johnson (1978) described reading comprehension as bridging known knowledge with new information on the printed page. They categorized factors that influence comprehension as being *inside the head* and *outside the head*. Inside the head factors included linguistic competence, interest, motivation, and accumulated reading ability. Outside the head factors included elements on the page or the characteristic of the text and the qualities of the reading environment.

According to Pearson and Fielding (1991), the three important issues in reading comprehension are the reader's prior knowledge, text coherence, and text structure. Readers with greater prior knowledge remember and comprehend more of

the material read (Brown, Smiley, Day, Townsend, & Lawton, 1977; Pearson, Hansen, & Gordon, 1979). Prior knowledge must be activated in order to improve comprehension (Bransford & Johnson, 1972); however young and poor readers often are unable to perform this metacognitive task (Paris & Lindauer, 1976). Anderson (1994) strongly recommended the use of advance organizers, graphic aids or direct instruction to assist readers in activating prior knowledge.

Text coherence allows the reader to make logical connections between and among the ideas in the text (Harris & Sipay, 1990). Beck, McKeown, and Worthy (1995) suggest that the content, form, and style of the text encourage reader engagement. They further indicate that the text must be interesting and contain the concept of voice that is comprised of activity, orality, and connectivity.

Text structure refers to how the ideas in a text are organized and provides a framework to assist the reader in judging, organizing, and recalling information (Meyer & Rice, 1984). Story grammar refers to the syntactic structure of a story including the setting, problem, goal, and outcome (Meyer & Rice). Over period of time, through reading and instructional interventions in story grammar, the reader's story schemata is filled or fine-tuned. Eventually the reader becomes self-sufficient in activating prior knowledge concerning text structure (Pearson & Fielding, 1991).

Halliday (1973) indicates that comprehension is further influenced and developed through social action and events. Cooperative learning provides an opportunity for high-achieving and low-achieving to learn together in mixed-groups and enhances both cognitive and social learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1985; Slavin,

1987). Students' engagement and attention are magnified when they are provided opportunities to work in pairs or groups (Beck, McKeown & Worthy, 1995).

Drama in the Classroom

Rationale

The use of drama in the classroom has many unique, powerful qualities (Nathan & Stanovitch, 1991; Stewig & Burge, 1994; Stayter & Allington, 1991). It is a whole-class teaching tool that welcomes all children regardless of their academic ability or socio-economic background. It reaches a wide gamut of linguistically or culturally diverse children (Cecil & Lauritzen, 1994). Drama activities transform a classroom into a language laboratory (Cecil & Lauritzen) where "aesthetic and educational values exist in harmony" (Combs, 1987, p. 10), and children learn from their many real or imagined experiences.

Drama affords an opportunity for children to experience literature and identify with the story characters. A child has to become that character and understand where the character lives, what the character experiences and how and what the character feels (Stayter & Allington, 1991).

The use of mental imagery is enhanced through drama (Manen, 1984). Through an interaction of the author's thoughts and the child's own thoughts the child journeys to a distant place or time period. Once there, imagery provides an opportunity for the child to pause and move backwards, forwards, or sideways in

attempt, to garner understanding (Booth, 1985). The construction of a realm of illusion is the essential activity of drama (O'Neil, 1985).

Drama encourages the use of dialogue. Allen, Brown, and Yatvin (1986) indicate that dialogue promotes the use of appropriate speech pattern and language. Children experiment with their voice quality, tone, and pitch to illustrate the physical or emotional state of a character. A fundamental ingredient that makes drama central to language development occurs when children use language at both the conscious and unconscious level (Morgan & Saxton, 1988). Classroom drama provides children with many language-learning situations that challenge children to create verbal and nonverbal language (Stewig & Burge, 1994).

Drama activities can aid in comprehension of literature (Jett-Simpson, 1989) and contribute a strong force in the students' growth in reading and writing (Edmiston, Enciso, & King, 1987). McGregor, Tate, and Robinson (1977) suggest that by creating and sharing experiences, communicating perceptions and attitudes, modifying the actions and behaviors of others, children construct meaning. Bolton (1984) suggested that drama provides an opportunity for the students to understand more deeply what they already know. Drama invites children to comprehend the text by removing the clouded layers that interfere with understanding (Booth, 1985).

Children become emotionally involved and explore feelings through drama (Combs, 1987). Children often work out their own emotions, such as fear and frustration, when working on a drama activity (Stewig & Burge, 1994). Being able to express the attitudes, beliefs, and emotions of others while understanding one's own

personal values and beliefs is a key element in the emotional area of learning in drama (Stayter & Allington, 1991; Verriour, 1994).

Drama evokes the use of higher order thinking skills and problem solving skills (Booth, 1985, Combs, 1987; Heathcote & Herbert, 1985). As the distance between the print and the reader decreases, comprehension increases, and thinking skills are sharpened (Yaffee, 1989). The ability to create and maintain a dramatic context requires the student to think critically, undertake new research, and ask questions (Verriour, 1994).

Through drama children learn to work together, building a sense of trust and cooperation (Cecil & Lauritzen, 1994; Wolf, 1995). Teamwork, the very heart of drama, is a very important social value developed through dramatics (Yawkey, Askov, Cartwright, et. al, 1981). Drama is an inclusive classroom activity (Stewig & Burge, 1994) that allows children to share their own ideas, attitudes and cultural backgrounds with others (Stayter & Allington, 1991; Verriour, 1994).

Drama in education provides a whole meaning for each student (Courtney, 1987). Students performing the text are actively engaged in developing thinking and speaking skills while the audience is actively engaged in developing listening skills.

Research

Educators and psychologists have described extensively the values, benefits, and outcomes of using drama in the language arts classroom (Bolton, 1984; Cecil & Lauritzen, 1994; McCaslin, 1984; Moffet & Wagner, 1992; Nathan & Stanovitch, 1991; Stayter & Allington, 1991; Stewig & Burge, 1994). On the other hand,

empirical research supporting the positive effect of drama on literacy development is meager and many of the existing studies are not methodologically sound (Wagner, 1991).

In a meta-analysis of sixteen studies (from kindergarten through seventh grade), Kardash and Wright (1987) determined that creative drama had an overall moderate, positive mean effect on reading, oral and written communication, person-perception, and drama skills. Their results indicated an extremely small effect size for reading achievement; however, only two studies investigated the effects of drama on reading achievement.

Pelligrini (1980) reported a relationship between dramatic play and reading achievement. He compared kindergarten children engaged primarily in dramatic play to those engaged in little dramatic play and found those engaged in primarily dramatic play scored significantly higher in word and story comprehension and in understanding syntactic structures. Isenberg and Jacob (1983) reported that first-grade boys who had not achieved high levels of dramatic play experienced difficulty in reading.

The results of two studies, Henderson and Shanker (1978) and Strickland (1973) suggested that interpretative dramatics activities were more effective than using basal reader workbooks in conjunction with the textbook in developing comprehension skills. DuPont (1992) determined that the comprehension skills of fifth-graders, reading below grade level, were enhanced by the use of creative drama.

Isenberg and Jacob (1983) concluded that dramatic play promotes literacy development by providing an opportunity for children to use representational skills which is the basis for representation in literacy. It also provides a secure environment for practicing the social behaviors and skills necessary for literacy development.

In contrast, Pelligrini (1985) concluded that the use of dramatic play to promote literacy development is probably not grounded in research. Kardash and Wright (1987) and Wagner (1991) suggested that more research is needed to determine the causal effect of drama on reading. Studies need to be more specific in determining what particular type of dramatic play yields the greatest gains (Kardash & Wright; Wagner).

Summary

Readers Theatre is a dramatic art form in which animated readers interact with literature and entice the audience into a vitalized response through vivid imagination (Tanner, 1993). The values and benefits of using Readers Theatre in the classroom have been outlined in the literature (Busching, 1981; Coger and White, 1967; Dixon, Davies, & Politano, 1996; Tanner, 1993). Educators have used this distinct, distinctive approach to involve children in literature and promote reading development and achievement (Post, 1979; Sloyer, 1982; Trousdale & Harris, 1993; Walker, 1992; Wolf, 1994). Amidst the plethora of literature promoting the use and acknowledging the merits of Readers Theatre, there is a paucity of empirical research.

Winegarden (1978) acknowledged that evidence in some studies, claiming Readers Theatre to be an effective intervention in developing reading achievement, was weak and tentative. On the other hand, a noble, admirable effort was made by some researchers (Goodman, 1990; Millin, 1996; Walker, Salverson & French, 1983; Stayter & Allington, 1991; Wolf, 1992) to determine the effects of Readers Theatre as a reading strategy. This effort continues.

Several characteristics of effective oral reading instruction have been identified (Rasinski, 1989; Reutzel, Hollingsworth, & Eldredge, 1994). A practical and theoretical analysis of Readers Theatre as an instructional procedure unveiled the following. Readers Theatre focuses on developing fluency and comprehension through repeated readings of a script. New or unfamiliar words are learned in the context of reading and decoding is addressed when necessary, generally in a feedback session. The teacher models fluency for the students and provides an explanation and encouragement for reading with feeling and expression. The teacher offers support and provides feedback, either to a group or individual, throughout the oral reading practice. The students are actively engaged in the reading practice, everyone has a part or role. The students are provided high interest material which is reading level appropriate. The purpose of reading the scripts is to provide a motivating tool to entice children to read. Finally, Readers Theatre establishes a cooperative learning environment in the classroom.

Readers Theatre combines many oral reading procedures. These include: repeated reading (Samuels, 1979); Oral Recitation Lesson (Hoffman, 1987); echo

reading (Walker, 1988); and paired repeated reading (Koskinen & Blum, 1986; Topping, 1987a). Readers Theatre can capture the attention of even the most reluctant readers (Wolf, 1992) and ignite a love for reading (Cullinan, 1982; Robertson, 1990). Through dramatization and repeated readings, Readers Theatre provides students with an opportunity to garner an understanding of the text. Through this understanding, the student can transform his knowledge, attitudes, and feelings about his environment and those around him (Stayter & Allington, 1991).

Chapter 3

Method and Design

Setting

The study was conducted in a large urban, special-needs district in central New Jersey. There are approximately 7,115 children in this K-12 district who attend public school. The district consists of ten elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school.

Eighty percent of the children in the district receive free or reduced lunch. Approximately 85% of the student population is comprised of children from African-American families, 11% is children from Hispanic-American families, 3% is children from Anglo-American families, and 1% is children from Asian-American or Native American families.

Participants

A total of 179 fifth grade students from four different schools within the same urban school district participated in the study. The participants came from ten separate, intact classrooms. Three classes from one school comprised the control groups and received no treatment (n=47). Four classes from two different schools comprised the quasi-control group and received paired repeated reading (n=76). Three classes from one school comprised the experimental group and received Readers Theatre (n=56). Two students, one in the experimental groups and one in

the quasi-control group chose not to participate in the experiment. Five students, one in the control group, three in the quasi-control group, and one in the experimental group, moved from their school during the experiment.

The administrators of each school formed each of the classes in June, 1998. Students are assigned to the classrooms in an attempt to form academic heterogeneous groups. Some personality and behavioral factors, teacher recommendation, or parent request may have been involved in placing children in specific classrooms.

Participation in the study involved taking a written standardized test and reading a passage for the purpose of collecting a voice sample (see Appendix B for permission slips). Prior to beginning the experiment, passive permission slips were sent home with the students. If the parent/guardian agreed to have their child participate in the study, they did not sign or return the permission slip. If they did not want their child to participate in the study, they returned a signed permission slip to the primary researcher. Children who did not participate in the study were not excluded from the classroom reading instruction and activities as planned by the teacher.

Children classified as learning disabled participated in the reading activities in the classroom. Their test results were not included in this study if they received their reading instruction outside the classroom. If they received their reading instruction in the regular classroom, their results were included in the study.

Design and Analysis

A quasi-experimental nonequivalent control group design (Cook & Campbell, 1979) was employed for this research. Of the three instruction methods Readers Theatre served as the experimental treatment group, paired repeated reading served as the quasi-control group, and the traditional method of instruction served as the control group. In order to test the reading comprehension of all groups, a standardized reading test was administered as a pretest and a posttest. In order to test oral reading rate and oral reading word accuracy, all members of all groups read one of two passages as a pretest and read the alternate passage as a posttest.

A one way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to measure the effects of comprehension, oral reading rate and oral reading word accuracy. Post test scores for each dependent variable were analyzed separately using an analysis of covariance with pretest scores serving as the covariate. A $p < .05$ level was used to test the level of statistical significance. Appropriate post-hoc analysis techniques (Scheffe) were used to further examine any statistically significant main effect.

Independent Variables

The independent variables in this study include method of instruction (Readers Theatre, paired repeated reading, and the traditional basal program).

Dependent Variables

The effects of the independent variables were sought on the following measures of comprehension and fluency: (a) oral reading rate (WPM), (b) oral reading word accuracy (WA), (c) and a raw score (CRS) for comprehending

unfamiliar text. Pre-and post-experiment measurements were obtained on each participant. These included voice recordings which were analyzed for reading rate and word accuracy and a standardized reading comprehension test which provided a raw score for comprehending unfamiliar text. The standardized test was administered to the students in each individual classroom in a group setting.

Reading rate (WPM) was measured by counting the number of words in the passage, multiplying that number by 60, and then dividing that number by the number of seconds it took the participant to read the passage.

Word accuracy (WA) was measured by the number of oral miscues subtracted from the total number of words in the passage. Oral miscues demonstrated by the reader included word omissions, insertions, substitutions, aided words, repetitions, and reversals.

The *TerraNova Reading Test, Level 15* (McGraw/Hill) was administered to all participants. This test was used as both the pre-test and the post-test.

Examiner Training

The examiners who analyzed the voice recordings test included reading specialists, certified teachers, and a pre-service teacher. Their training consisted of extensive practice listening to voice recordings on a training tape and identifying miscues of omissions, insertions, substitutions, aided words, reversals, and repetitions, and making the appropriate notations on a printed Teacher Record Form (Wood & Moe, 1995).

Following the initial training sessions of listening to and scoring voice recordings, examiners demonstrated their competence in analyzing the voice recordings for the appropriate measures. They were not approved to analyze voice samples until they reached a criterion of 95% accuracy. Additionally, ten training samples were compared and an interrater reliability of 90% had to be achieved. The examiners were given additional training if necessary.

In scoring both the pre-test and post-test voice samples, 32% of the recordings were rescored by a different evaluator to maintain the interrater reliability of 90%. If the interrater reliability fell below 90%, additional samples would have been rescored. Rescoring the samples to determine a final reading rate and word accuracy were performed by a third evaluator.

The written standardized tests were hand scored by the classroom teachers, retired teachers, and pre-service teachers from Rutgers University. The results of the scoring provided the raw score achieved by the individual participants.

Data Collection

Data were collected one week immediately prior to the implementation of the experiment and one week immediately after the conclusion of the experiment. All participants took the standardized test that was administered by the primary researcher and/or the classroom teacher.

The primary investigator collected voice samples. All students in like grades read the same passages (Woods & Moe, 1995) which took approximately two to three minutes to read (see Appendix C for text of passages). A different passage was

read in the pre-and post-experiment voice recordings. The level, form, grade level utilized predicted score, and readability level (Woods & Moe) are found in Table 1 on page 62. The Harris-Jacobson formula 2 (Harris & Sipay, 1990) was used to determine the predicted score.

Table 1

Analysis of Passages Read to Measure Fluency
 (*Harris & Sipay, 1990; Woods & Moe, 1995)

<u>Form</u>	<u>Grade Level</u>	<u>Number of words</u>	<u>Number of different words</u>	<u>Number of Sentences</u>	<u>Predicted Score Harris-Jacobson</u>	<u>Readability Level Spache</u>	<u>Vocabulary Diversity</u>
	(Woods & Moe)	(Woods & Moe)	(Woods & Moe)	(Woods & Moe)	(Woods & Moe) (*Harris & Sipay)	(Woods & Moe)	(Woods & Moe)
A Pretest ¹	Three	138	94	12	5.52*	3.4	5.1
C Pretest ²	Four	144	95	13	4.78		5.7
B Posttest ²	Four	144	87	12	4.63		5.1
C Posttest ¹	Four	144	95	13	4.78		5.7

¹Students who read Form A in the pretest read form C in the posttest (Section AC).

²Students who read Form C in the pretest read form B in the posttest (Section CB).

Materials

The classroom teachers in the experimental groups received Readers Theatre scripts suitable for the reading levels of their students (see Appendix D for a listing of the scripts). Most scripts were selected to correlate with the unit theme of the basal reader textbook. Scripts were also selected to correlate with the specific genre of children's literature found in the basal reader. The length and content of a particular script determined the amount of time a class spent on a script. Shorter scripts were read in a one-week period; whereas, longer scripts were read for a two or three week period. Scripts containing parts written at a variety of reading levels, were used. This provided reading material that accommodated the wide range of students' reading abilities in each classroom.

The teachers in the quasi-control and control groups used the reading material provided them by the school district for use in their classrooms. The primary source of reading material was the World of Reading Series (Pearson, Johnson, Clymer, et. al., 1991). Teachers in the quasi-control and control groups used supplemental materials including trade books, poetry, picture books, magazine articles, and student newspapers. With few exceptions a different story from the basal reader was introduced each week.

Instructional Procedures

These instructional activities were implemented during the regularly scheduled reading periods for a twelve-week period during the 1998-1999 school year. Reading periods are scheduled, for a daily, sixty-minute period.

The primary researcher visited all classes once a week. During these visits the researcher answered questions and addressed concerns of both the teachers and students. She also ensured that the appropriate treatment was being administered.

The students' and teachers' journals were reviewed to verify proper implementation and documentation of the reading instruction method. Teachers and students received additional instruction if necessary. The project checklists were collected at this time.

The following reading assessment forms were given to all teachers at the beginning of the project. A fluency rating form and observation checklist was provided to the teacher to be used for evaluating oral reading. A group report form, fluency rating form, and several individual assessment forms were provided for the teachers' and students' use (Dixon, Davies, & Politano, 1996) (see Appendix K for assessment forms).

All teachers received directions on the importance of logging the amount of time the students spent reading orally every day. They were encouraged to make note of any remarkable situations, positive or negative, regarding the reading material, student attitudes, student behaviors, or student comments. They were also encouraged to record their own attitudes, feelings, and concerns.

Each classroom received writing journals for the students' use during the study. The students used these journals to record their feelings, attitudes, concerns and comments about their reading instruction and/or material. The journals were also used as response journals, responding to teacher-directed activities such as describing a character, writing a new ending to the script or summarizing the story. The investigator collected the journals at the conclusion of the study.

Experimental group (Readers Theatre). The instruction for the teachers in the experimental classes was as follows.

1. The history and benefits of Readers Theatre were discussed.
2. The organizational content, as described on pages 82-88, was reviewed and discussed.
3. Instruction on how to use the scripts to teach reading skills was reviewed. The Lesson Plan as described on page 75 was discussed and reviewed.
4. Classroom management was discussed.

- a. During the experiment the teacher may use different methods to divide the class into play reading groups. The teacher can divide the groups by assigning numbers, randomly assigning students to specific groups, intentionally assigning certain students to work together, or allowing students to choose with whom they want to work.

Heterogeneous grouping should provide an opportunity for a weaker reader to work with a stronger reader. Regardless of how the students

are assigned, the teacher should identify groups and where they go quickly so that they get “on task” without creating class disruption.

- b. The teacher can use all areas of the classroom plus any additional space, such as the stairwells, and hallways, for the students to read scripts
 - c. Since students are encouraged to help each other pronounce unknown or difficult words, the teacher can demonstrate how this is done while being kind and respectful to each other
 - d. Instruction was given on providing guidelines for working in groups with other students. Students are to be reminded that working in a group is a privilege. They are to be encouraged to focus on the task of reading, giving attention to tone, volume, pitch, stress, and intonation. A student who oversteps the boundaries of working together in cooperative groups will have to work independently until he/she feels as though he can participate in the activity.
6. Instruction on how to assign reading parts was given. If scripts have a large number of reading parts or if one or more parts is very small, students can be assigned more than one reading part.
7. Instruction on how to use the group report form, fluency rating form, and self-evaluation forms was given. These forms could be used separately or in combination with the writing journals. Both the teacher and the students can use the fluency rating form.

8. The teachers received directions on the importance of logging, daily, the amount of time the students spent reading the scripts. They were encouraged to record their attitudes, feeling and concerns. They were also encouraged to note situations regarding the scripts, student attitudes, student behaviors, and student comments.
9. Instruction and suggestions were given on how to use the students' writing journals. These journals can be used to answer specific questions using the self-assessment or group evaluation forms and/or to log the student's feelings, attitudes and concerns about Readers Theatre. They can also be used as response journals when responding to teacher-directed activities such as describing a character, writing a new ending, or summarizing the story.

The characteristics of Readers Theatre, for this study, were provided and discussed with the teachers.

These characteristics include:

1. Practice of the material is paramount. The students needed to be involved in reading the scripts for fifteen minutes every day.
2. The scripts are read rather than memorized.
3. The students should reread the material giving special attention to volume, stress, pitch, rate, and tone.
4. Reading *with feeling* should always be emphasized. Mood should be expressed by using facial expressions and voice reflections.

5. Physical movement and action are unnecessary. Gestures can be used as long as they can be done while holding the script.
6. The students read to the audience rather than to other characters in the script.
7. The narrator sets the tone, explains the action, and describes any setting that is not included in the dialogue.
8. Performances for other classes or parents are not required but are generally viewed as a rewarding experience by the students.
9. Costumes, scenery, props, and lighting are unnecessary. (Adding music, props, scenery for a production is acceptable, provided the students spend fifteen minutes, daily, reading and rereading the scripts).
10. Specific scripts can be used for one week or longer depending on the content of the script, the pace of instruction, and the interest of the students.
11. The content of the script should be used in extension activities that include teaching reading skills such as characterization, summarizing information, and identifying main idea and details.
12. The major objective of Readers Theatre is to read orally every day. The dramatic element associated with Readers Theatre is secondary.
13. The students were encouraged to use “How Did I Read”, which is a guide to aid oral reading (Crisco & Lanasa, 1995). (See Appendix E)

In addition the following instructional goals were presented to the teachers using Readers Theatre as an instructional method.

The implementation of Readers Theatre should:

1. Provide a motivational method to teach reading.
2. Improve word recognition skills.
3. Increase reading fluency by increasing reading rate and word accuracy through repeated readings of the text.
4. Increase comprehension skills through improved word recognition.
5. Increase vocabulary.
6. Increase retention of concepts, vocabulary, literary elements and content through repeated readings of the text.
7. Provide a meaningful and purposeful oral reading activity.
8. Cultivate an appreciation and understanding of literature.
9. Provide an opportunity for students of varying reading and learning abilities to work together cooperatively and collaboratively.
10. Cultivate an appreciation for theatre and drama.
11. Provide an opportunity to read in front of an audience.

Quasi-control group (Paired Repeated Reading). The instruction for the teachers in the quasi-control classes included the following.

1. The history and benefits of paired repeated reading were discussed.
2. Instruction was given on the paired repeated reading method outlined by Koskinen and Blum (1986). This method is as follows:

- a. Step 1--Using material currently available in the classroom, each student selects a passage of approximately 50 to 75 words. Having each partner select a different passage discourages direct comparison of reading proficiency and makes listening to a partner more interesting.
 - b. Step 2--The students read their selected passages silently and then decide who will read first. For example: The person whose first name comes first in the alphabet can read first. The person whose birthday comes later in the year can read first.
 - c. Step 3--The first student reads his/her passage aloud 3 times to his partner. The reader may ask his/her partner for help in pronouncing a word. After each oral reading, the reader answers the question, "How Well Did I Read" on a self-evaluation form (See Appendix I). Using the Listening Evaluation Form as a guide (See Appendix J), the student listens to his/her partner read helping with word pronunciation as necessary. After the second and third reading, the listener informs the partner of how his/her reading improved.
 - d. Step 4--The students switch roles and follow Step 3.
- 3. The paired reading activity should take 10-15 minutes every day. Reading only short passages allows time for both partners to read.
 - 4. Classroom management was discussed.

- a. The teacher may use different methods to divide the class into reading partners. The teacher may divide the class by assigning numbers, randomly assigning specific partners, intentionally assigning certain partners, or allowing students to choose a partner. Heterogeneous pairing should provide an opportunity for a weaker reader to partner with a stronger reader. Regardless of how the students are assigned, the teacher should identify partners and encourage them to quickly get “on task” without creating class disruption.
 - b. The teacher can use all areas of the classroom plus any additional space, such as the stairwells, and hallways, for the students to read their selections.
 - c. Since students are encouraged to help each other pronounce unknown or difficult words, the teacher can demonstrate how this is done in a kind and respectful manner.
5. Instructions were given on providing guidelines about working in pairs. Students were reminded that working in pairs is a privilege. They were encouraged to focus on the tasks of reading and listening. Any student who oversteps the boundaries had to work independently until he/she feels as though he can participate in the activity.
6. Instructions on how to use the group report form, fluency rating form, and self-evaluation forms were given. These forms can be used separately or

in combination with the writing journals. Both the students and teachers could use the fluency rating form.

7. The teachers received directions on the importance of logging, daily, the amount of time the students spent in the paired reading procedure. They were encouraged to record their attitudes, feeling and concerns. They were also encouraged to note situations regarding the material read, student attitudes, student behaviors, and student comments.

8. Instructions were given on the use of the students' writing journals.

These journals can be used to answer specific questions using the self-assessment and/or to log the student's feelings, attitudes and concerns about paired repeated reading. They can also be used as response journals when responding to teacher-directed activities such as describing a character, writing a new ending, or summarizing the story. The journals were collected at the conclusion of the experiment.

Control group (Traditional Method). The instructional procedures for teachers in the control groups are primarily found in the teacher's manual. These teachers were asked to keep a log of their daily reading activities. They were requested to report all amounts of time their classes were involved in oral reading activities such as choral reading, paired reading, play reading, and round robin reading.

Writing journals were provided for students in the control groups. These journals can be used to record the students' attitudes, feelings or concerns about

reading. They can be used to respond to teacher-directed activities. These journals were collected when the study is completed.

Lesson Plans

Teachers in all three groups were responsible for teaching specific reading skills as outlined in the school district's language arts curriculum. Teachers in the experimental groups used the content and information from the scripts to teach or reinforce specific skills. Teachers in the quasi-control groups and control groups used content and information from the basal reader or supplemental material to teach the skills. Examples of lesson plans using both a Readers Theatre script and a basal reader are as follows:

Lesson Plan Using Information from Basal Reader

Objective: The student will compare two characters in a story identifying how they are alike and how they are different.

Anticipatory Set: Ask for a show of hands to determine the number of children who have seen a monkey or a crocodile. On the board, illustrate a food chain showing what wild animals eat, pointing out that crocodiles might eat monkeys.

Activities: The class will read the story, The Monkey and the Crocodile by Paul Galdone (Pearson, Johnson, Clymer, et al., 1991). The students will take turns reading orally (round robin reading).

Guided Practice: The class will participate in identifying how crocodiles and monkeys are alike and how they are different by completing the following chart. The teacher will write the following heading on the board, and students will make contributions to complete the chart.

Crocodile	Alike	Monkey
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Independent Practice: The students, working independently, will complete a chart comparing seals and whales.

Assessment: Complete workbook page 74 with 80% accuracy (Pearson, Johnson, Clymer, et al. 1991).

Lesson Plan Using Information from a Readers Theatre Script

Objective: To make a comparison of two characters in a story identifying how they are alike or different.

Anticipatory Set: Ask for a show of hands to determine how many children have seen a mouse. A lion? On the board draw a semantic web and elicit information about lions and mice from the students to complete the web.

Activities: Read the script, The Lion and the Mouse (Braun, 1996). Students will participate in oral reading of the script for 15 minutes.

Guided Practice: The class will participate in identifying how the two animals are alike and how they are different by completing the following chart. The teacher will write the following heading on the board and students will make contributions to complete the chart.

Lion

Alike

Mouse

Independent Practice: Complete a chart comparing a tortoise and a hare.

Assessment: The students will complete a chart comparing five characters found in Aesop's fables. They will list five accurate statements in each column.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted for a six-week period in February and March of 1998. The specific purposes of the pilot study were: (a) to develop a time management plan for administering the standardized tests and obtaining the voice samples; (b) to determine the adequacy of the tape recorder; (c) to determine script appropriateness; (d) to determine the clarity of instructions given to classroom teachers; (e) to determine the effectiveness of supplemental evaluation forms provided for the teachers including the fluency assessment form and the writing journals; and (f) to determine the most suitable readability levels for the pre-test and post-test passages.

Two fifth grade classes, one fourth grade class, and one third grade class constituted the experimental groups and one third grade class constituted the control group. Of the 93 passive permission slips sent home to parents, none were returned (See Appendix F for permission slip) indicating permission for their child to participate in the study. Reading comprehension scores of a unit test administered throughout the district were obtained from an additional fifth grade class after the conclusion of the pilot study.

Input from the teachers and students was encouraged throughout the pilot study. Teachers and students were encouraged to comment on script interest and appropriateness, extension activities, integration of script content into other subjects, classroom management, and the amount of time spent reading orally (See Appendix G for scripts used at each grade level).

During the pilot study, data were collected for reading rate, word accuracy, and comprehension. Voice samples were collected from students in the five classrooms (See Appendix H for passages used in pre-and post testing). The comprehension subtest of the *Metropolitan Achievement Test* was administered to students in four classes. After the conclusion of the pilot study, results of the district-wide quarterly reading test were compared in two fifth grade classrooms. Voice samples were also collected for the training tape.

The results of the pilot study indicate the use of Readers Theatre as a reading strategy improved reading comprehension and oral reading word accuracy. A two-way analysis of variance (treatment by pretest/posttest) was used to analyze the data. The gains made from pretest to posttest were significant for comprehension for fifth grade students in the experimental group, $F(1, 60) = 16.61, p < .001$. The gains made from pretest to posttest were significant for third graders in the experimental group in comprehension, $F(1, 60) = 18.81, p < .001$, and oral reading word accuracy, $F(1, 60) = 4.9, p .05$. The mean scores of students in the experimental groups indicate Readers Theatre promotes a faster reading rate; however, the gains were not statistically significant. The third grade control group also demonstrated an improved mean score in reading rate.

Additional results of the pilot study are provided in Table 2 on page 78, Table 3 on page 79, Table 4 on page 80, and Table 5 on page 81.

Table 2

Mean Performance Scores of Student in Pilot Study Grade 3

	Experimental Group					Control Group				
Reading Measure	<u>n</u>	Pre Test	SD	Post Test	SD	<u>n</u>	Pre Test	SD	Post Test	SD
Comprehension MAT-7 Raw Score	21	28.1	7.97	34.95	8.76	20	22/0	4.91	23.75	8.06
Rate- WPM Passage 1	22	101.1	26.6	121.9	4.97	15	103.1	20.89	116.8	20.83
Word Accuracy Passage 1	22	115.1	4.4	115.7	1.83	15	112.6	5.80	112.5	4.79
Rate-WPM Passage 2	21	88.0	29.81	100.0	24.58	7	84.7	19.88	101.3	26.13
Word Accuracy Passage 2	21	135.9	11.35	139.5	5.58	7	135.4	9.4	135.3	13.67

MAT-7 is the Metropolitan Achievement Test Seventh Edition.

WPM=words read per minute.

SD=Standard Deviation.

Table 3

Mean Performance Scores of Students in Pilot Study--Grade 4

	Experimental Group					Control Group			
Reading Measure	<u>n</u>	Pre Test	SD	Post Test	SD	Pre Test	SD	Post Test	SD
Comprehension MAT-7 Raw Score	14	32.75	11.2	34.06	9.12	--		--	
Rate- WPM	17	93.7	27.17	102.5	19.3	--		--	
Word Accuracy	17	130.5	6.54	130.6	10.43	--		--	

MAT-7 is the Metropolitan Achievement Test Seventh Edition.

WPM=words read per minute.

SD=standard deviation.

Table 4

Mean Performance Scores of Students in Pilot Study--Grade 5-1

	Experimental Group					Control Group				
Reading Measure	<u>n</u>	Pre Test	SD	Post Test	SD	<u>n</u>	Pre Test	SD	Post Test	SD
Compre- hension Raw Score*	21	5.86	2.63	13.24	3.05	18	5.05	2.47	7.67	4.31
Rate- WPM	16	110.4	24.9	123.5	28.84		--		--	
Word Accuracy	16	150.2	6.72	153.4	4.27		--		--	

*Unit 3 Process Test --Silver Burdett Ginn Reading Series

WPM=words read per minute.

SD=standard deviation.

Table 5

Mean Performance Scores of Students in Pilot Study—Grade 5-2

		Experimental Group				Control Group			
Reading Measure	<u>n</u>	Pre Test	SD	Post Test	SD	Pre Test	SD	Post Test	SD
Comprehension MAT-7 Raw Score	10	31.6	8.82	38.3	7.48	--		--	
Rate- WPM	12	111.1	29.11	122.8	32.41			--	
Word Accuracy	12	147.3	7.39	150.8	5.33	--		--	

MAT-7 is the Metropolitan Achievement Test Seventh Edition.

WPM=words read per minute.

SD=standard deviation.

Organizational Content

The organization of the experiment was as follows:

Week 1 - Pre Experiment Testing

All students participating in the study were tested during this week. Voice recordings were taken before, during, or after school. Each participant read the appropriate passage. Before reading orally into the tape recorder, the student were encouraged to read the passage silently one time. These recordings were marked with the appropriate date and class code and were analyzed and scored by the examiners at a later time.

All students took a written standardized test, *TerraNova Reading Test, Level 15*. This test was administered to each intact class of students by the classroom teacher or primary researcher. All tests were marked with the participant's name, class code, and date of administration and were scored by the examiners at a later time.

Week 2-Experimental group (Readers Theatre). Suggestions were taken from The Elementary Drama Curriculum Guide (1985) in developing the Week 2 instructional format.

Readers Theatre was introduced to the students by their teacher. The teacher explained to the students that they would observe a Readers Theatre presentation. They were encouraged to listen to and watch the demonstration carefully.

The teacher and one student read a poem that had been scripted in Readers Theatre style. After reading the poem, the teacher elicited observations from the students regarding Readers Theatre. The observations were written on the board (e.g. “it was sort of like a play”, “you read with feeling”).

After the discussion, the students were given scripts and divided into heterogeneous groups of two or three readers, with stronger and weaker readers placed in each group. The teacher circulated through the groups giving assistance and modeling the elements of the form. The students read the scripts for fifteen minutes.

After the fifteen-minute period, the teacher requested a group to read their script to the class. During the reading time, the teacher made positive remarks concerning volume, tone, pitch, and intonation.

The teacher gave the readers instruction in reading orally and using simple gestures (e.g. “think about your character, if he’s angry, read the part with anger in your voice”, “you want to paint a picture for your audience”, “you can wipe your brow or tip your imaginary hat”).

The teacher reminded the students that even though this was like a play, costumes, stage sets, make-up and elaborate props are not used. It is important that everyone work on reading their scripts with ease and with meaning and feeling. It is also important that everyone work cooperatively in his or her group encouraging everyone to do well.

This process was repeated each day throughout the first week. Students were given the opportunity to perform throughout the week with each student given at least one item of constructive criticism.

The teacher familiarized the students with the “How Did I Read” guide and encouraged the students to refer to it frequently. Also, the teacher familiarized the students with the assessment forms and writing journals.

Week 2-Quasi-control group (Paired repeated reading). Suggestions from Koskinen and Blum (1986) were used in developing the Week 2 instructional format for this quasi-control group.

The paired repeated reading procedure was introduced to the students by their teachers and primary researcher. The teacher explained the procedure to the students and encouraged to listen to and to observe the demonstrations carefully. Since this introduction involved three sessions, it was done over a three-day period.

Day 1-Session 1—The students were informed that they would be reading passages several times so that they would become better readers. An analogy, such as a soccer player shooting on goal repeatedly to improve his scoring ability, was used to improve the students’ understanding of the importance of practice. The students worked in pairs, and each student chose a passage of about 25 words. They each read the passage silently. Next, one student read his/her passage to his/her partner. Then, the “How Well Did I Read” form was introduced to the class and the teacher demonstrated how to record responses after each oral reading. Students who had just read marked their forms and reread the passage two more times, evaluating

their oral reading. The partner was then given an opportunity to read and complete the reading form.

Day 2-Session II--The teacher or researcher modeled the role of the listener, explaining that the role of the listener is to help your partner with unknown or difficult words and to inform your partner on how his/her reading is improving. The teacher provided the students an opportunity to practice listening for an improvement in reading. The teacher first read a passage in a halting, monotone manner and/or with many errors. Then the teacher read the same passage with feeling and expression and with few errors.

The teacher reviewed the "Listening Evaluation Form" and each student was given an opportunity to listen to his/her partner read, complete the form, and share the results with his/her partner.

Day 3-Session III--Students selected a passage of 50-75 words in length being aware that the passages ended in a complete sentence. Students were given the opportunity to participate in an entire paired reading activity including using the "How Well Did I Read" form and the "Listening Evaluation Form." The oral reading and listening activity lasted 10-15 minutes. The teacher circulated among the students, observing the students and offering help or suggestions as needed. The teacher gave additional assistance by modeling fluent reading, giving attention to intonation, volume, pitch, stress, tone, and syntax.

The teacher familiarized the students with the “How Did I Read” guide and encouraged the students to refer to it frequently. During the week, the teacher instructed the students on the procedures concerning writing in their journals.

Week 2-Control group (Traditional Method).

The teacher conducted daily reading lessons in the following format. The reading skills were presented using a Direct Instruction Lesson Plan for 30 minutes. The students then read silently for 20 minutes. The teacher read aloud to the students for 10 minutes. The students used their textbooks or other supplemental materials, such as trade books other basal readers as reading material. The students used their writing journals as instructed by the teacher. The teacher noted any time the students spent reading orally, including paired reading, choral reading, play reading, round-robin reading, and/or echo reading. The teacher logged the type of reading material used in class instruction and made note of any oral reading activity.

Weeks 3-14--Experimental group (Readers Theatre). The students participated in reading the scripts in groups for fifteen to twenty minutes every day.

Day 1--The scripts were introduced to the students. The teacher read the scripts to the students, modeling reading fluently and with expression. Using their copy of the script, the students silently follow the teacher’s reading.

The teacher discussed the pronunciation and meaning of any new or unfamiliar words. Discussions were held concerning the story elements or information from the script that was used in teaching specific reading skills. The students read the scripts for fifteen minutes.

Days 2-4--The scripts were distributed to the students. The students read their scripts for fifteen to twenty minutes in their groups or with a partner. The teacher circulated throughout the room and gave assistance as necessary. The included correct word pronunciation and reading fluently giving attention to pausing, inflection, volume, pitch, syntax, stress, or tone.

The teacher used the remainder of the reading period to teach the reading skills as required by the curriculum. The skills taught at the fifth grade level included recognizing cause and effect, summarizing, making predictions, identifying main idea and details, drawing conclusions, making inferences, identifying story elements, and identifying character traits. The skills were taught using the text of theatre scripts as the source of reading material.

Day 5--After the scripts were distributed to the students, they practiced reading their scripts in a group or with a partner. After a fifteen-minute practice period, the individual groups shared their play reading with their classmates.

The teacher used the remainder of the class period to teach the required reading skills.

If a script is used for more than one week, the class continued with Days 2-4.

Weeks 3-14--Quasi-control group (Paired repeated reading). The students continued with the paired reading procedure using material from their basal reader textbook or supplemental material. The sessions lasted from 10-15 minutes every day. The teacher used the remainder of the class period to teach the required reading

skills using the teacher's manual or other teacher resource material as a guide. The students continued to use their writing journals as directed by the teacher.

Weeks 3-14--Control group (Traditional Method).

The teacher conducted the reading lessons using the direct instruction lesson plan. The children read silently every day. Supplemental material was used at the discretion of the teacher. The teacher logged any time the students spent reading orally.

Week 15 - Post-Experiment Testing

All students participating in the study were tested during this week. Voice recordings were taken before, during, or after school. Before reading orally into the tape recorder, each student was encouraged to read the passage silently one time. These recordings were marked with the appropriate date and class code and were analyzed and scored by the examiners at a later time.

All participants took the *TerraNova Reading Test, Level 15*. The classroom teacher and/or primary investigator administered these tests. All tests were marked with the participant's name, class code, and date of administration and were scored at a later date by the examiners.

Integrity of Experiment

Throughout the experiment, all classrooms were visited at least once a week to ensure that the appropriate treatment was being given. During this time the primary investigator read the teachers' logs, read the students' journals, and collected and/or read student evaluation forms. At the time of the visit the

researcher responded in writing to the journal entries of both the teachers and students. The primary researcher observed the reading instruction given in the classroom and answered questions of the students, teachers, and/or building administrators. Observations were logged on the group specific checklist (see Appendix N for checklists).

Additional copies of the appropriate checklist, attached to a clipboard, were placed in all classrooms. All classroom visitors, such as parents, administrators, and school faculty or staff, were encouraged to complete the checklist when they observed reading instruction, Readers Theatre, or the paired reading procedure. The checklists were collected from the classrooms at each visit.

Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

This study examined the effects of the use of Readers Theatre as a reading instruction method on fifth grade students' fluency and comprehension. The purpose of this study was: (a) to determine differences in reading comprehension, (b) to determine differences in oral reading rate, and (c) to determine difference in oral reading accuracy when Readers Theatre was compared to paired repeated reading and the traditional method of reading instruction using a basal reader.

To examine the differences between the dependent variables, the following null hypotheses were analyzed:

1. There will be no significant difference in the reading rate of fifth grade students who received Readers Theatre as a method of reading instruction for a twelve-week period and those who received paired repeated reading of the text as a method of reading instruction.
2. There will be no significant difference in oral reading accuracy of fifth grade students who received Readers Theatre as a method of reading instruction for a twelve-week period and those who received paired repeated reading of the text as a method of reading instruction.
3. There will be no significant difference in the comprehension scores of

fifth grade students who received Readers Theatre as a method of reading instruction for a twelve-week period and those who received paired repeated reading of the text as a method of reading instruction.

4. There will be no significant difference in the reading rate of fifth grade students who received Readers Theatre as a method of reading instruction for a twelve-week period and those who received the traditional form of classroom instruction.
5. There will be no significant difference in oral reading accuracy of fifth grade students who received Readers Theatre as a method of reading instruction for a twelve-week period and those who received the traditional method of classroom instruction.
6. There will be no significant difference in the comprehension scores of fifth grade students who received Readers Theatre as a method of reading instruction for a twelve-week period and those who received the traditional form of classroom instruction.

Each hypothesis was tested by a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA).

This type of statistical analysis was used to test the significance of the differences among the means of the three groups. For each dependent variable, a pretest score was the covariate. The post-hoc analysis technique, Scheffe, was used to further examine any statistically significant main effect. A $p < .05$ was used for all tests of significant difference.

The three independent variables were identified as the method of instruction. These included the following: (a) the control group received the traditional method of instruction using primarily a basal reader (TM), (b) the quasi-control group received repeated paired reading (PR), and (c) the experimental group received Readers Theatre (RT).

The dependent variables were identified as oral reading rate (WPM), oral reading accuracy (WA), and comprehension raw score (CRS). A pretest and posttest measurement was obtained from each participant on each of the dependent variables. Passages from Analytical Reading Inventory (Woods & Moe, 1995) were used as the source of reading material for the voice recordings which were analyzed for oral reading rate and oral reading accuracy.

Reading rate (WPM) was measured by the number of words in the passage multiplied by 60 and divided by the number of seconds in which the participant read the passage. Word accuracy (WA) was measured by the number of oral miscues measured subtracted from the total number of words in the passage. Oral miscues included word omissions, insertions, substitutions, aided words, repetitions, and reversals.

The *TerraNova Reading Test Level 15* (McGraw/Hill) was used to determine differences in the students' reading comprehension of unfamiliar text. The measurement used was the raw score obtained by each of the students on the pretest and posttest.

The remainder of this chapter presents the statistical analyses of each null hypothesis of each dependent variable, i.e., oral reading rate, oral reading accuracy, and comprehension. The interrator reliability results will also be presented. The integrity of the experiment will be presented. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results.

Oral Reading Rate

The first dependent variable in this study was oral reading rate. Hypothesis one examined the dependent variable of oral reading rate between the experimental group (RT) and the quasi-control group (PR). Hypothesis four examined the dependent variable of oral reading rate between the experimental group (RT) and the control group (TM).

Passages from Analytical Reading Inventory (Woods & Moe, 1995) were used as the source of reading material for the voice recordings that were analyzed for oral reading rate. In the pretest reading, the participant read one of two passages, which are identified as Form A and Form C (See Appendix C for the passages). These two passages were alternated between the students as they made themselves available to participate in the experiment. In the posttest reading, the participant read one of two passages which are identified as Form B and Form C. (See Appendix C for the passages). At the posttest reading each participant read a passage different from what was read at the pretest. At both the pretest and posttest reading the participant was allowed to read through the passage before reading into the recorder.

At the time of the post experiment reading, Form A was replaced with

Form B. It was realized Form A had a grade three reading level whereas Form C had a grade four reading level (Woods & Moe, 1995). In order to make the post experiment passages of equal grade level, Form B (Woods & Moe), which had a grade four reading level replaced Form A (See Table 1, pg. 61).

Reading rate (WPM) was measured by the number of words in the passage multiplied by 60 and divided by the number of seconds in which the participant read the passage. A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test for differences obtained from pretest and posttest measures. The pretest score served as the covariate. The results indicated a statistically significant difference among the three groups, Readers Theatre, repeated paired reading, and the traditional method, $F(2, 171) = 13.948$, $p = <.001$. The means and standard deviations for oral reading rate are presented in Table 6. The ANCOVA summary of the oral reading rate results is presented in Table 7.

Hypothesis number one tested for differences in the students' oral reading rate between the experimental group (RT) and the quasi-control group (PR). The Scheffe post hoc procedure conducted at the .05 simultaneous level of significance. yielded a $t = 4.29$ which was greater than the critical $t = 2.76$ Hypothesis number one was rejected.

Hypothesis number four tested for a difference in the students' oral reading rate between the experimental group (RT) and the control group (TM). The Scheffe post hoc procedure yielded a $t = 4.87$ which was greater than the critical $t = 2.76$

which was tested at the .05 simultaneous level of significance. Hypothesis number four was rejected.

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations of Treatment Groups on Oral Reading Rate of Total Participants (WPM)

	Control Traditional Method Using Basal n=47		Quasi-Control Paired Repeated Reading n=76		Experimental Readers Theatre n=52	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pretest	92.510	26.734	106.980	33.538	105.003	29.179
Posttest	104.209	28.387	121.282	35.843	131.074	28.410
Adj. Mean	113.316		117.282		128.798	
.999CL	105.274- 121.370		111.203- 123.276		121.327- 136.269	

Table 7

ANCOVA Summary for Oral Reading Rate of Total Participants (WPM)

Source	SS'	DF	MS'	F	<i>p</i>
Between	6,709.028	2	3354.514	13.948	<.001*
Within	41,124.480	171	240.494		
Total	47,833.508	173			

*.999F_{2,171}=7.194

.95F_{2,171}=3.045

Oral Reading Accuracy

The second dependent variable in this study was oral reading word accuracy (WA) when reading unfamiliar text. Hypothesis two examined the dependent variable between the experimental group (RT) and the quasi-control group (PR). Hypothesis five examined the dependent variable between the experimental group (RT) and the control group (TM).

Passages from Analytical Reading Inventory (Woods & Moe, 1995) were used as the source of reading material for the voice recordings that were analyzed for oral reading accuracy. In the pretest reading, the participant read one of two passages that are identified as Form A and Form C (See Appendix C for the passages). These two passages were alternated between the students as they made themselves available to participate in the experiment. In the posttest reading, the participant read one of two passages which are identified as Form B and Form C. (See Appendix C for the passages). At the posttest reading each participant read a passage different from what was read at the pretest. At both the pretest and posttest reading the participant was permitted to read the passage, silently, before reading into the recorder.

At the time of the post experiment reading, Form A was replaced with Form B. It was realized that Form A had a grade three reading level whereas Form C had a grade four reading level (Woods & Moe, 1995). In order to make the post

experiment passages of equal grade level, Form B (Woods & Moe), which had a grade four reading level was used instead Form A.

Word accuracy (WA) was measured by the number of oral miscues demonstrated by the participant subtracted from the total number of words in the passage. Oral miscues included word omissions, insertions, substitutions, aided words, repetitions, and reversals. Self-corrections were not counted as an oral miscue. Proper nouns that may have occurred more than one time in the passage were counted as one miscue even though the student may have mispronounced it more than one time. A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test for differences obtained from the pretest and posttest measures. The pretest score served as the covariate. The results indicated a statistically significant difference among the three groups, Readers Theatre, repeated paired reading, and the traditional method, $F(2, 171) = 6.026$, $p = <.003$. The means and standard deviations for oral reading accuracy are presented in Table 8. The ANCOVA summary of oral reading accuracy is presented in Table 9.

Hypothesis number two tested for differences in students' oral reading accuracy between the experimental group (RT) and the quasi-control group (PR). The Scheffe post hoc procedure conducted at the .05 simultaneous level of significance yielded a $t = 2.65$ which was less than the critical $t = 2.76$. Hypothesis number two was not rejected.

Hypothesis number five tested for a difference in the students' oral reading rate between the experimental group (RT) and the control group (TM). The Scheffe post hoc procedure conducted at the .05 simultaneous level of significance yielded a $t = 3.4$ which was greater than the critical $t = 2.76$; therefore, the null hypothesis number five was rejected.

Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations of Treatment Groups on Oral Reading Word Accuracy of Total Participants (WA)

	Control Traditional Method Using Basal n=47		Quasi-Control Paired Repeated Reading n=76		Experimental Readers Theatre n=52	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pretest	130.064	10.296	130.605	8.277	131.884	8.176
Posttest	135.234	7.284	136.618	7.741	139.500	3.540
Adj. Mean	135.627		136.737		138.974	
.99CL	133.627- 137.536		135.259- 138.215		137.158- 140.790	

Table 9

ANCOVA Summary for Oral Reading Word Accuracy of Total Participants (WA)

Source	SS'	DF	MS'	F	<i>p</i>
Between	291.666	2	145.833	6.026	<.003*
Within	4138.116	171	24.200		
Total	4429.782	173			

*.99F_{2,171}=4.731

.95F_{2,171}=3.049

Comprehension

The third dependent variable in this study was students' reading comprehension of unfamiliar text. Hypothesis three examined the dependent variable between the experimental group (RT) and the quasi-control group (PR). Hypothesis six examined the dependent variable between the experimental group (RT) and the control group. (TM)

The *TerraNova Reading Test Level 15* (McGraw/Hill) was administered and the raw scores were derived. A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test for differences obtain from pretest and posttest measures. The pretest score served as the covariate. The results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference among the three groups, Readers Theatre, repeated paired reading, or the traditional method, $F(2, 169) = 2.775, p = .065$. Therefore, null hypotheses number three and number six were not rejected.

The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 10. The ANCOVA summary of the comprehension results is presented in Table 11.

Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations of Treatment Groups on Comprehension

	Control Traditional Method Using Basal n=45		Quasi-Control Paired Repeated Reading n=74		Experimental Readers Theatre n=53	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pretest	26.556	8.075	27.757	9.910	27.962	8.773
Posttest	28.800	8.989	30.662	9.503	32.000	7.707
Adj. Mean	29.614		30.445		31.613	
.95CL	28.367- 30.861		29.464- 31.426		30.462- 32.764	

Table 11

ANCOVA Summary for Comprehension

Source	SS'	DF	MS'	F	<i>p</i>
Between	96.066	2	48.033	2.775	.065*
Within	2925.066	169	17.308		
Total	3021.132	171			

*.95 $F_{2, 169}=3.049$

Interrator Reliability

The *TerraNova Reading Test* answer sheets were scored and rescored by classroom teachers, a preservice teacher, and retired teachers. The voice recordings were scored and rescored by reading specialists.

One hundred and ten answer sheets of the *TerraNova Reading Test* were rescored. Of the 5,060 items answered on these tests, the rescoring revealed 17 items with a different answer. This yielded an accuracy of greater than 99%.

One hundred and seventeen voice recordings were rescored for reading rate. The total number of seconds was 8,763 on the first scoring as compared to 8,811 seconds on the rescoring. This yielded an accuracy of greater than 99%. Of the 117 recordings, 54 revealed no difference, 41 revealed a difference of one second, 11 revealed a difference of two seconds, 7 revealed a difference of three seconds, and 4 revealed a difference of four seconds.

One hundred and seventeen voice recordings were rescored for oral reading accuracy. The total number of words read accurately on the first scoring was 12,610 words as compared to 12,623 words on the rescoring. This yielded an accuracy of greater than 99%. Of the 117 recordings, 39 revealed no difference, 44 revealed a difference of one word, 23 revealed a difference of two words, 6 revealed a difference of three words, 3 revealed a difference of four words, and 2 revealed a difference of five words.

Integrity of the Experiment

Throughout the experiment the primary investigator visited each classroom at least once a week, to insure that the appropriate treatment was being given. At this time the investigator read the teachers' logs, students' journals, students' assessment, reading and listening forms, and observation checklists. (See Appendix I for reading form, Appendix J for listening form, Appendix K for the students assessment forms, and Appendix L for observation checklists).

In the twelve-weeks that the treatment was administered the fifth grade students were in their classrooms on 53 days. Seven days were missed because of inclement weather, field trips, or school holidays. On other days specific events or activities, such as school assemblies, holiday programs or projects, teacher preference, or teacher absence hindered the students from participating in the project. A summary of the days each class was involved in one of the independent measures is provided in Table 12.

Table 12

Number of Days Readers Theatre, Paired Reading and Traditional Method Were Administered in the Classroom

Technique	Teacher	Days Administered
Readers Theatre		
	E-1	49
	E-2	44
	E-3	40
Paired Reading	C-1	44
	C-2	39
	S-1	44
	S-2	40
Traditional Method		
	J-1	48
	J-2	43
	J-3	40

Summary

The results of this study indicate that there were statistically significant differences between the control (TM), quasi-control (PR), and experimental groups (RT) on both reading rate and oral reading word accuracy using a one-way ANCOVA. There were no statistically significant differences between the groups toward reading comprehension.

The one-way ANCOVA conducted on reading rate yielded a $p = <.001$. Further investigation using a post-hoc analysis technique, Scheffe conducted at the .05 simultaneous level of significance, indicated a statistically significant difference between the experimental group (RT) and the quasi-control group (PR). Additionally the Scheffe indicated a statistically significant difference between the experimental group (RT) and the control group (TM).

The one-way ANCOVA conducted on oral reading word accuracy yielded a $p = <.003$. Further investigation using a post-hoc analysis technique, Scheffe conducted at the .05 simultaneous level of significance, indicated a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group. No statistically significant difference between the experimental group (RT) and the quasi-control group (PR).

Chapter 5

Discussion and Summary

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the results and to summarize the finding of the effects of Readers Theatre on fifth grade students'. First, the results of the research will be discussed. Second, conclusions will be presented. Third, an integration of the findings of this research with past findings will be discussed. Fourth, the implications for classroom use will be proposed. Fifth, the limitations of the study will be outlined. Finally, directions for future research will be offered.

Summary of the Study

The basic purpose of this study was to examine the effects of Readers Theatre on fifth grade students' fluency and comprehension when compared to paired repeated reading and the traditional method of reading instruction using a basal reader.

Discussion of Results

In this research, the statistical analysis using a one-way ANCOVA did demonstrate statistically significant findings in two areas of fluency, oral reading rate and oral reading word accuracy. A statistically significant main effect was determined by using the Scheffe. The one-way ANCOVA failed to produce statistically significant finding in comprehension.

Fluency

According to Harris and Sipay (1990), oral reading fluency encompasses speed and ease in reading. Inappropriate or slow reading rate may be a result of poor comprehension of what is being read, inability to focus on the task, and weak word recognition (Harris & Sipay). Appropriate reading rate suggests the presence of automaticity, the ability to recognize words quickly and accurately (LeBerge & Samuels, 1985). Word recognition is rapid and accurate and the words are grouped into thought units or phrases, and reading flows smoothly. Behaviors signaling word recognition problems include omissions, insertions, substitutions, reversals, and repetitions.

Readers Theatre is an instructional method that permits the reader an opportunity to read and reread the same script over a period of time of one week or longer. This allows the student to recurrently encounter unfamiliar, troublesome words. Eventually, the reader is able to recognize and pronounce these words quickly and accurately, developing accurate word recognition or automaticity.

Additionally, the rereading of the script permits the reader to develop prosodic strategies for organizing the text. This allows the reader to eventually move away from word-for-word reading toward using adequate phrasing, and reading with the correct intonation and appropriate pauses. In repeatedly performing the text, the student uses his/her voice to demonstrate an understanding of the meaning of the word or text as well as the tempo of the story.

In the process of rereading the scripts the reader expanded his/her sight word vocabulary and achieved automaticity of many words that had previously been unfamiliar to him/her. The student was freed of the “baggage” of laboring over unfamiliar words. Furthermore, the repeated reading of the script allowed the reader to use prosodic cueing and prosodic strategies and to read with the correct tone of voice, resonance, and tempo that reflects the meaning of the text of the script. The reader was able to probe the script, use his/her imagination, read critically, and express the meaning of the text.

Similarly, students in the quasi-control group (PR), read the text repeatedly. The students, however, selected their own reading material and read a different passage of 50-100 words every day. Even though they read this same passage three times, this procedure did not provide them an opportunity to encounter the same words over a long period of time, such as one week or longer. This may have prevented them from developing automaticity and expanding their sight word vocabulary. Furthermore, because these passages changed every day and were only a part of the whole story or article, the student may have been unable to glean the meaning of the words and/or the gist of the passage. Therefore, the student may have had greater difficulty reading in appropriate phrases and comprehending the material read, thus slowing down the rate of reading.

In reading for speed, RT promoted faster reading when compared to those reading from the text or repeatedly reading certain material. In contrast, the reading of scripts appears to be more effective in reading material accurately when compared

to the TM, but not when compared to PR. Those who received PR also had the advantage of practicing reading daily, tending to the pronunciation of new words, reading with expression, and experimenting with the appropriate prosodic pattern in the reading material.

Increased proficiency in the pronunciation and definition of specific words from the script may also be attributed to vocabulary instruction. For example, in one RT classroom, the students contributed to a word chart by writing a troublesome or unfamiliar word on the Word Chart. Each day the teacher reviewed the pronunciation and/or meaning of the word with the students. In another RT classroom, the teacher and students created a word wall of unfamiliar words. In two RT classrooms, the students used their journals to write the pronunciation and meaning of the word. The teachers assisted students in pronouncing a word, reading with expression and feeling, and phrasing words through the use of intonation, pitch, stress, and volume. These practices are in agreement with components of fluency instructions as identified by Rasinski (1989).

Teachers in the quasi-control group (PR) were available and offered support and guidance in pronouncing unknown words and reading with expression. In the PR classrooms, where students were reading different material which changed daily, word walls or charts were not created using words from the material the students were reading. Likewise, these students did not use their journals for vocabulary activities.

Word wall or charts were not obvious in the TM classroom; however, the journals from one classroom indicate that the students used the dictionary to write the definition and pronunciation of certain words. Students in the TM classrooms were observed using the basal reader as the primary source of reading material. In one TM classroom, the students were observed using supplemental material such as trade books and additional reading textbooks.

Additional Data Analysis

The replacement of Form A with Form B established two sections in the study, Section AC, those having read Form A in the pretest and Form C in the posttest, and Section CB, those having read Form C in the pretest and Form B in the posttest. The investigator felt that further analysis of the data could reveal differences of the two sections. Therefore, statistical analysis including the ANCOVA and the Scheffe were performed on reading rate and word accuracy on both Section AC and Section CB.

In addition a statistical analysis on overall fluency using the fluency rating form (White, 1995) was performed as well as fluency on Section AC and Section CB. The results revealed a significant difference between the experimental group and the quasi-control group, the experimental group and the control group, and the quasi-control group and the control group. These results indicate that repeated reading of the text, Readers Theatre or paired repeated reading, promote fluency. Additionally the same results were demonstrated on Section AC. The results revealed a

significant difference between the experimental group and the control group on Section CB.

Analysis of the data of reading rate (WPM) of Section AC indicated a significant difference among the groups. The results revealed a significant difference between the experimental group and the quasi-control group, the experimental group and the control group, and the quasi-control group and the control group. In the full data analysis a difference in reading rate was significant between the experimental group and the quasi-control group and the experimental group and the control group. There was no significant difference demonstrated on Section CB.

Analysis of the data of oral reading accuracy (WA) on Section AC indicated a significant difference among the groups. The results revealed a significant difference between the experimental group and the quasi-control group, the experimental group and the control group, and the quasi-control group and the control group. In the full data analysis there was a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group. There was no significant difference demonstrated on Section CB.

Analysis of the data concerning comprehension on Section AC and BC demonstrated no significant difference among the groups. This was consistent with the findings in the full analysis of the data.

See Appendix A for the results and discussion of this analysis.

Drama in the Classroom

The students in the experimental group remained enthusiastic throughout the twelve weeks. They looked forward to Readers Theatre everyday. In particular they

appeared eager to perform the script for their classmates. They also enjoyed evaluating their own performance as well as the performance of their classmates (See Appendix K).

Readers Theatre, a dramatic activity, is an interactive process that provided the reader an opportunity to make genuine, sound interpretations of the text. As students performed the text they were actively involved in developing speaking and/or oral reading skills, interacting with the text, and extracting meaning from the text. As students experimented with tone, pitch, volume and intonation they portrayed the physical and emotional state of the character. The readers used both their imaginations and reading skills to create mental images of the setting, costumes, props, and continuity of the story for the performers and audience.

Rosenblatt (1978) makes a comparison between reading and acting in a drama stating that “the actor infuses his own voice, his own body, his own gestures, his own interpretation into the text” (pg. 13). The comments two students made in their journals reveal how they felt as they interacted with the text, extracting the traits of the characters and the meaning of the story. Brett explained, “*Readers Theatre brought out my inner self. I like to think about what the author is trying to say and the people I am acting out.*” Steven wrote, “*in RT (you) act out the play as if you were the character in the story.*”

In this experiment the reader was engaged in purposeful reading, using his/her voice to interpret an authentic text. For twenty minutes every day each reader was “center stage”, totally absorbed in reading. The reader was the actor, the reader

was the “star”. This element of drama may have enabled the students to realize that reading is an activity that permitted the reader to experiment with reading words in different ways and experiment with reading to produce meaning. Using volume, pitch, stress, and intonation they were able to delve into the text, make the printed word come alive, and give the character “life”. The reader is able to reflect on the text, evaluate and revise how he/she would interact with the text and dramatically express the meaning of the script.

Journal Comments

Throughout the experiment the students in both the quasi-control group and the experimental groups were concerned about reading “faster” and knowing more words. Their journal entries describe how the students felt about their reading progress.

Readers Theatre. Comments in the students’ journals indicated a desire to learn more words, pronounce them correctly, as well as a sense of accomplishment or pride in learning more words. Likewise, several students commented on how knowing the meaning of the words helped them become better readers. Other comments suggest that using RT as a method of reading instruction created a sense of confidence in the students’ ability to read, fostered an interest in reading and increased one’s ability to focus while reading.

I want to improve on pronouncing my words...Joan (10-24-98)

I learned more words...sometimes I mumble because I don’t know words, but reading a script I know the words and their meanings...Joan (11-12-98)

RT helped me expand my vocabulary...Tom

I can pronounce hard words...Rene

What I gained from RT was learning to read better...and how to pronounce words...Marie

RT helped me so much now I like to read books and magazines and so on...Steven

RT helps with pronunciation...I learned to read better without stutter...Charles

Now I read better and with expression...Brielle

I can stay focused now when I read books, magazines...Jeanenne

Once you (I) start reading you (I) don't want to stop...John

These reflections indicate that the students felt they: (1) improved their ability to recognize and pronounce words, (2) knew the meaning of the words, (3) were more comfortable with their ability to read and, therefore, read more and (4) could stay focused while reading. These four aspects are in agreement with elements of adequate reading rate as described by Harris and Sipay (1990). Additionally, some of these comments indicated that the student spent more time reading both at school and at home which according the Anderson, Wilson and Fielding (1988) is linked to reading fluency.

Paired Reading. Comments in the students' journals from the quasi-control group reflected some of the same feelings indicating the students felt good about their reading ability, that their reading had improved and that they were spending more time reading.

I think I'm good at nothing...Gaylord (11-11-98)

I feel good about my reading...Gaylord (12-2-98)

My reading is improving...Al

I think my reading is improved because I am reading faster and louder and more clearer...Ed

I feel better about my reading..I started reading newspapers, books and a novel. I didn't like reading when we started, I got better everyday...Dick

When I first started I couldn't read with expression and now I read with expression. I didn't like to read much, but since I started paired reading, I read every day now...Regina

I think my reading has improved because I know more words and I read more smoothly...Barbara

My reading is changing because I read when I get home and before I go to bed...Genny

My reading has improved because I read at home and at school...Charlene

These reflections also indicate that the students felt they had improved their ability to recognize and pronounce words, were more comfortable with their ability to read and were spending more time reading. Again these are in agreement with elements of adequate reading rate as described by Harris and Sipay (1990). Again, some of the students indicated they spent more time reading both at school and at home which according the Anderson, Wilson and Fielding (1988) is linked to reading fluency.

Traditional Method. Writing journals were supplied to all students in the TM classes; however, they were used in only one TM class. In this particular class the

journals were used to respond to the literature, define vocabulary words, and/or to complete a reading or writing assignment. Comments made by the students in these journals did not reflect their feelings about their reading ability or attitude.

Comprehension

Another dependent variable measured reading comprehension using a standardized test. The one-way ANCOVA indicated no statistically significant difference existed among the three groups.

According to LeBerge and Samuels (1974) the development of automaticity enables the reader to focus on comprehension. In the upper grades, there is a correlation of 0.65 between word-recognition accuracy and reading comprehension (Harris & Sipay, 1990). The correlation between reading rate and reading comprehension range between 0.50 to 0.80 (Stanovitch, Cunningham, & West, 1981).

Even though there were no statistically significant differences reported, a difference was evident among the three groups when comparing the mean pretest and posttest scores. The differences between the mean posttest and pretest scores of each of the three groups are as follows: (a) the control group (TM) had a difference of 1.24, (b) the quasi-control group had a difference of 2.9, and (c) the experimental group had a difference of 4.04. Each of the methods demonstrated an improvement in comprehension; however, the experimental group (RT) had the largest gain, followed by the quasi-control group (PR). On the one hand the students' gains in fluency were most likely attributed to automaticity, using prosodic cueing strategies,

and dramatically interacting with the text. On the other hand, these factors did not aid the students' ability to comprehend the text. These findings parallel those of Dowhower (1987) indicating it is unclear how prosodic cueing is related to comprehension.

Comments or entries in the journals indicate that the students in the experimental group did comprehend the content of the scripts. Their entries concerning identifying character traits, summarizing the script, and sequencing main events were thorough and accurate.

Entries in the journals of students in the quasi-control group (PR) indicated that they were able to identify the main idea of the passage of what they read as well as what their partner read. Additionally, entries in the journals of students from one of the control classes (TM) indicated comprehension of the material read. Journal entries from one control class included story mapping, summarizing, compare and contrast, and character analysis were accurate, elaborate, and complete.

The journal entries reveal that some students in each of the three groups, control, quasi-control, and experimental, used their journals to respond to the literature or expand on specific reading skills. The use of journals may have reinforced the reading instruction in each of the three groups and aided comprehension; therefore, no significant difference was established among the groups.

In addition to written comments, at the time of the fluency posttest, several students indicated comprehension of the text as they read orally. For example, the

students from both the experimental (RT) and quasi-control group (PR) asked questions or made comments about what they had read. Comments and questions from students in the experimental group (RT) included: (a) "*Do buzzards really do that?*" (b) "*His horse died, that's sad*", (c) "*How did the buzzard know the horse was dying?*" and (d) "*The horse died.*" Comments from students in the quasi-control group included: (a) "*How sad...the horse died,*" (b) "*I didn't know buzzards did that,*" and (c) "*Oh, no, his horse died*". In contrast, no student in the control group (TM) offered any relevant, pertinent comments at the time of the posttest which may indicate a lack of understanding what they were reading orally.

In the long term, the students in the experimental group, having read The Odyssey (Homer) and A Midsummer Night's Dream (Shakespeare), may demonstrate greater understanding of literature and/or Shakespeare when they attend in middle school or high school. Having read these two scripts, they have created and/or enlarged their schemata and have gained some knowledge of classic literature and Shakespeare. Therefore, when these students encounter Shakespeare and/or other classic literature in the future, they will have an organized schemata and prior knowledge, both of which are key components in reading comprehension.

In this study, no significant difference was evident in comprehension even though a significant difference was evident in reading rate and word accuracy. The gains the students made in reading text with greater speed and accuracy, which would indicate improved word recognition skills and/or automaticity, apparently did not transfer to the comprehension of reading unfamiliar material silently. In addition,

according to Dowhower (1987) research is unclear as to whether comprehension gains on practiced text transfers to unpracticed text.

Conclusions

Based on the finding of this study, the major conclusions are presented in this section.

1. The use of Readers Theatre as an instructional reading strategy is effective in increasing reading rate in oral reading.
2. The use of Readers Theatre as an instructional reading strategy is effective in improving word accuracy in oral reading.

These gains in fluency are most likely attributed to developing automaticity, recognizing and using prosodic strategies, and dramatically interacting with the text.

Integration of Findings with Past Literature

The uniqueness of this investigation rests in implementing Readers Theatre in a fifth grade self-contained classroom. Readers Theatre was incorporated into the reading program for twelve weeks in an effort to increase fluency and reading comprehension.

Research investigating the use of Readers Theatre, as an instructional strategy, has been limited. Earlier studies included using Readers Theatre: (1) as a listening strategy (Maberry, 1975), (2) in a pull-out program for students in a Title 1 program (Millin, 1996), (3) in a reading clinic for students experiencing reading difficulties (Walker, Salversin & French, 1985), and (4) in a middle-school reading

class for a two-week period (Goodman, 1990). On the one hand the results of this study are convergent with the findings of Millin in that the use of Readers Theatre increased fluency. They are also convergent with the findings of Goodman in that the use of Readers Theatre did not improve reading comprehension.

On the other hand, the results of this study are divergent with the finding of Millin (1996) whose study noted an increase in reading comprehension when using Readers Theatre. Additionally, they are divergent with the findings of Walker, Salvorsin, and French (1995) whose results indicated that repeated readings had greater gains in fluency than did Readers Theatre. The opposite results were obtained in this study.

This study supports past research in that Readers Theatre improves reading fluency. Research in using Readers Theatre to promote reading comprehension is mixed and indecisive. This would indicate that additional studies examining the use of Readers Theatre to increase reading comprehension are needed.

Considering the nature of Readers Theatre, one of its primary attributes is repeated reading of the script. Repeated reading provides the reader an opportunity to develop fluency by becoming familiar with unknown words, reading larger units of words (phrases), using expression to signify feelings or characterization, and using intonation, stress and pitch. Thus, this study is convergent with the repeated reading research findings of Samuels (1979), Moyer (1982), Herman (1986), Dowhower (1987), Rasinski (1990) whose results indicate repeated readings has a positive effect on word recognition and reading rate.

In contrast, there is less support in the literature regarding the effect repeated reading has on reading comprehension. The results of this study are divergent with findings indicating repeated reading has a positive effect on comprehension (Chomsky, 1979; Dowhower, 1987; O'Shea, Sindelar & O'Shea, 1985; Sindelar, Monda & O'Shea 1990).

A number of repeated reading researchers measured fluency alone, and not comprehension (Gonzales & Elias, 1976; Moyer, 1982; Rasinski, 1990). In this study the students in the experimental group (RT) demonstrated a significant difference in reading rate and word accuracy when compared to the control group (TM); however, they did not demonstrate a significant difference in reading comprehension. Likewise, the quasi-control group (PR), another repeated reading method, demonstrated a significant difference when compared to the control group (TM) in reading rate; however, they did not demonstrate a difference in comprehension. The findings of this study and previous studies would suggest that additional research is necessary regarding the various methods of repeated reading including Readers Theatre.

Implications of Findings

Support for using Readers Theatre in the classroom can be found in the theory of automatic information process in reading (LeBerge and Samuels, 1974) in which the practice of repeated reading the scripts increases reading rate and word recognition. Additional support can be found in the transactional theory of reading (Rosenblatt, 1978) in which reading is viewed as a performing art. Rosenblatt

suggests that the reader take an efferent or aesthetic stance when reading and participate in a transaction with the text to produce meaning.

Rationale for using RT in the classroom can also be found in the multiple intelligences theory (Gardner, 1985). Readers Theatre can be used as an activity for students using the verbal-linguist, interpersonal, visual-spatial, or bodily kinesthetic intelligences (Morris, 1999; Nicholson-Nelson, 1998). Additional support can be found in the cooperative learning paradigm (Johnson & Johnson, 1985).

Schreiber's research in prosodic cue development (1980) provides additional support for using RT in the classroom. Schreiber maintains that children use the syntactic, semantic, morphological, and contextual features to compensate for the lack of prosodic information in the text to achieve reading fluency. According to Schreiber it is important for a student to hear "a fluent reader produce the appropriate phrasing of the sentence in the passage" (pg. 183). This will enable the student to read with greater ease, reproduce the appropriate phrasing and have a greater understanding of the reading task.

The findings from this study indicate that repeated oral reading of scripts has a positive impact on fluency. Therefore, students, in order to become fluent readers should participate in Readers Theatre several times throughout their education process.

Readers Theatre exposes the students to many genres of literature. In addition, the comments in the students' journals revealed an increased positive attitude toward reading, an appreciation for classic literature, and an appreciation for

Shakespeare. Comments also indicated that Readers Theatre was a method that appealed to a large variety of students of varying abilities and was a method that offered them “help” in reading. Therefore, teachers should consider integrating Readers Theatre into their reading instruction.

Readers Theatre scripts are available for a variety of subjects, including famous scientists, current social and/or health issues, science topics, and historical events or figures. Scripts, as well as instructions for instituting Readers Theatre in the classroom, are available on the Internet or through book publishers.

Reproduction of the scripts is cost efficient. Therefore, educators and administrators should consider implementing Readers Theatre in their reading program, especially in content area subjects such as science, social studies, health, and math.

Readers Theatre combines both reading and performing. This instructional strategy enables students to achieve both the reading and performing arts standards. Therefore, administrators and educators should consider adopting this method of instruction in the school or classrooms.

Readers Theatre is an activity that develops students’ multiple intelligences, specifically linguistic, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, and interpersonal intelligences. It is also a cooperative learning activity. Therefore, administrators and educators should promote its use in the classroom as a method to meet the needs of a variety of learners and provide an opportunity for children to work together in the classroom.

Limitations of the Study

Specific limitations or conditions that were beyond the control of the researcher may have affected the conclusions of this research. Limitations are evident in applying the results of this study to other situations.

The first limitation was the inability to randomly select and/or assign subjects to a specific group; therefore, the researcher was unable to affirm the equivalence of the groups. District administrators and teachers contributed to the selection of schools and classes and method of instruction given in each school. In order to eliminate differences between the assigned groups, the analysis of covariance was chosen as the method of analysis.

The sample size of this experiment was 179 students. This encompassed ten classes in four different schools. This project was limited in size as to what was manageable for one researcher to conduct the testing and training and make weekly visits to the classroom. A larger sample size may have produced different results.

Another limitation was the size of the three groups. There were 47 participants in the control group, 56 in the experimental group, and 76 in the quasi-control group. The quasi-control group had the advantage of having a larger sample size than the other two groups and may have affected the results, especially in the area of word accuracy and reading comprehension.

Although the curriculum was the same throughout the district, teaching style varied from teacher to teacher. Teacher enthusiasm for teaching reading in general or toward the program also varied from teacher to teacher. Teaching personalities,

teaching style, and desire and/or attitude toward teaching reading were not within the control of the investigator. Measuring this variable was not part of the study.

This study was limited to fifth-grade students in a large district in an urban environment. Therefore, generalizing the results of this research to other grade levels and other settings is cautioned.

Directions for Future Research

The findings of this study indicate that Readers Theatre can be a significant component of a reading program especially in developing fluency. Further research efforts concerning the effect of Readers Theatre on improving fluency are needed to substantiate the findings of this study. Taking into account the findings of this study, observations of the investigator, and comments in the students' journals, the following suggestions are made for future investigations.

1. A study examining the changes in students' attitudes toward reading when exposed to Readers Theatre is suggested. Based on comments in the students' journals, the investigator is led to believe that there were significant changes in the students' attitude and patterns in reading. Placement would have the same three levels as in this study (control group, quasi-control group, and experiment group).
2. A study examining the effectiveness of Readers Theatre on reading comprehension and fluency with other grade levels or other populations is recommended. Statistically significant results were obtained in comprehension and word accuracy in the pilot study for third grade

students using Readers Theatre in the classroom as compared to a traditional method of reading. In addition, statistically significant results in comprehension were obtained in the pilot study for other classes of fifth grade students; therefore, further investigation of the effectiveness of using Readers Theatre to increase comprehension is recommended. Future research efforts could examine the comprehension of the content of the material read using a publisher's test instead of a standardized test as the tool to test comprehension. Alternately, comprehension could be tested using the questions that accompany passages in an Informal Reading Inventory, such as Analytical Reading Inventory (Woods & Moe, 1999) or Qualitative Reading Inventory-II (Leslie & Caldwell, 1995); therefore, the same source could be used to test both fluency and comprehension.

3. A study in which RT is used intermittently throughout the school year is another area to pursue. This study did not answer the question of how much time is necessary for Readers Theatre to be effective in developing fluency and comprehension. Furthermore, statistically significant differences were obtained in the pilot on comprehension scores at the fifth grade level when the study was conducted in a six week period. It is unknown whether RT should be done on a daily basis for the entire school year or interspersed in units throughout the year. One suggestion is to implement Readers Theatre during six four-week blocks throughout the

year. Paired repeated reading and the traditional method of reading could serve as the quasi-control and control groups.

4. A study investigating the long-term effects of Readers Theatre on students' public speaking ability is another area to pursue since some states have a public speaking component on the state-mandated tests. Comments in the students' journals in the experimental group (RT) indicated that they gained confidence and became more comfortable when speaking in front of an audience; therefore, the investigator is led to believe that the use of RT may have improved their ability to speak before a group.
5. A replication of this study of a longer period of time to investigate the effects of Readers Theatre on comprehension is another suggestion for future research. Research in this area is needed due to the findings of this study where the ANCOVA revealed an $F(2, 169) = 2.775, p = .065$.
6. A study examining the effects of Readers Theatre on vocabulary is suggested. Placement again could consist of the three levels employed by this study (control group (TM), quasi-control group (PR), and experimental group (RT). The experiment could be of the same duration as this study or for a longer period of time.
6. Future research efforts could replicate this study and examine the effects of Readers Theatre on fluency and comprehension on students achieving specific percentiles or quadrants on standardized tests. Research could

reveal whether or not students who achieve scores in quadrant 1 or 2 or below the 50th percentile on standardized tests would benefit from Readers Theatre.

7. Future research efforts could examine the comprehension of material in specific content areas such as math. Research could reveal whether or not students achieved greater comprehension of specific math concepts such as problem solving, number sense, fractions measurement, and/or estimation when scripts, adapted from picture books with a mathematics focus, are used integrating math, reading and drama. Placement would consist of three levels. The experimental group would read scripts adapted from children's literature with a mathematics focus (RT), a quasi-control group would have the picture books read to them, and a control group would use a math textbook as their source of instruction.
8. A study examining the appreciation of literature when using RT is suggested. Maberry (1975) examined the students' appreciation of literature when they listened to literature performed as Readers Theatre. The written comments made by students in the experimental group (RT) in this study indicated they gained an appreciation for classic literature and Shakespeare; therefore, the investigator is led to believe the use of Readers Theatre improves the students' appreciation for literature.

In this experiment journals were provided for the students. The journals were used more in some classes than in others. The journals were used for a variety of

purposes that included responding to the literature, completing assignments, or writing their own thoughts and feelings about participating in the experiment. One teacher in the quasi-control group (PR) assigned a journal activity only once a week; however, the students expressed a desire to use the journals more frequently. Because the students wrote freely and honestly, shared their feelings, reflected on the literature as well as on the experiment and/or method, and evaluated the progress in reading of their classmates and/or themselves, including the use of journals in any future research is highly recommended.

Subjective Findings Related to this Experiment

Throughout this experiment, students in the experimental group (RT) made comments in their journals. Even though, these comments were not tested, they may be of interest.

Appreciation of Literature

For many of the students in the experimental group, reading the script, A Midsummer Night's Dream (Shakespeare), provided them their first exposure to Shakespeare. At first the students experienced some difficulty with the pronunciation of the words as well as understanding the play itself. With time, however, the students became intensely engaged in the reading of the script and asked many pertinent questions, seeking clarification or information about the plot and/or characters. One group of four boys began experimenting with their own interpretation of the play and read the script in "rap" style. This group expressed

disappointment on the final day of reading the script because they felt with one more week of practice, they “*could get it (rap) down really good*”.

The students’ appreciation for Shakespeare and his work was evident in the following comments:

I wish we could have done Romeo and Juliet...Natalie

I had a good time and it seems that Shakespeare is not boring either...Zelma

A Midsummer Night’s Dream was a good story. Today is the last day. I am going to miss it...Rod

Readers Theatre help you understand...the artistic ways of great artists like Shakespeare...Bruce

The students who read The Odyssey (Homer) indicated an appreciation for this piece of classic literature by their comments.

Odyssey...I love the play...I want to read it again and again...some of the words were hard...I looked forward to reading it...Eleanor

I really loved the Odyssey...I don’t want to stop reading it...Nicolie

Today was the last day of it (RT). I don’t want to stop reading it (Odyssey)...Lamar

The students in the experimental group revisited the genre of fairy tales and folk tales; however, the stories were in script format. The students expressed an appreciation for these stories in the following comments.

The Seven Servants...this story...seemed to be better than all the books I read ...John

Readers Theatre is fun because you get to read stories that you can’t find on the bookshelves or library...Jorge

Attitude Towards Readers Theatre

The students were enthusiastic toward Readers Theatre throughout the duration of the experiment. They looked forward to reading every day. They especially enjoyed performing the script for their classmates and being videotaped. Comments in the students' journals indicated great disappointment or anger if they "missed" participating in Readers Theatre because of a conflict such as an instrumental music lesson.

In contrast, some of the students in the repeated paired reading groups became disenchanted, disillusioned, and/or "bored" with the process. Some students in one group expressed a desire to stop being part of the experiment after the first four weeks. The teachers' journals of the repeated paired reading groups indicated that on some days it was difficult to get class organized and begin the procedure.

The participants in the experimental group (RT) eloquently articulated the reasons for using Readers Theatre in the classroom.

RT helped me read in front of the class...Brett

RT has helped my reading. I now pause at commas and periods. It has improved my oral speaking skills. Now I like to speak, read, and give oral reports. The best part is working together, reading parts with feeling. It is fun. I speak out loud. I love that. It seems that someone is really listening to me and paying attention to what I say and not ignoring me...Carla

I wish that tomorrow was not the last (day)... I was doing so good in it (RT). For the first time I had fun in reading...RT is the best and only thing I got in to help me read...Bill

I love Readers Theatre, it is the bomb...I can't wait until tomorrow...Greg

I think RT was invented to help kids like us...it helps me read better...I can stay focused now when I read...Mike

RT is the best program I ever entered. I wish it would last forever...Steven

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Appendix A

Addendum

The following information is an addendum to the five chapters of the dissertation. It consists of additional statistical information that is not included or explained in the proposal. Statistics, an ANCOVA and the Scheffe, as described in chapter three were subsequently performed as an overall fluency rating on the total participants as well as an overall fluency rating, reading rate, and word accuracy on two separate sections within the total sample. These statistics were performed because approximately three weeks into the project the researcher recognized that the passage used in the pretest, Form A (See Appendix C) had a readability level of 3.4 using the Spache readability formula (Woods & Moe, 1995). The alternate passage, Form C (See Appendix C) had a predicted score of 4.78 using the Harris-Jacobson readability formula (Woods & Moe). In order to make both passages used in the posttest procedure of near equal readability levels, Form B (See Appendix C) was introduced at the posttest sessions and replaced Form A. Form B has a predictability score of 4.63 using the Harris Jacobson readability formula (Woods & Moe).

There are two sections represented in these additional statistics. The first section, identified as Section AC, read Form A at the pretest and Form C at the posttest. The second section identified as Section CB, read Form C at the pretest and Form B at the posttest. A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test for any significant differences among the means of the three groups. The post

hoc analysis technique, Scheffe, was used to further identify any statistically significant main effect.

In an effort to distinguish any differences in the two sections, Section AC and Section CB, the following statistics were performed:

- a. An overall fluency rating using the fluency rating scale was performed on the total sample. This rating scale tool was obtained from the National Assessment of Educational Process and is shown in Figure 1 on page 161.
- b. A fluency rating using the fluency rating scale was performed on Section AC.
- c. A fluency rating using the fluency rating scale was performed on Section CB.
- d. Analysis of reading rate was performed on Section AC using the same procedure as was applied to the total sample.
- e. Analysis of reading rate was performed on Section CB using the same procedure as was applied to the total sample.
- f. Analysis of word accuracy was performed on Section AC using the same procedure as was applied to the total sample.
- g. Analysis of word accuracy was performed on Section CB using the same procedure as was applied to the total sample.

Figure 1

Oral Reading Fluency Rating Scale

Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress (White, 1995)

Level 4	Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions, and deviations from text may be present, these do not appear to detract from the overall structure of the story. Preservation of the author's syntax is consistent. Some or most of the story is read with expressive interpretation.
Level 3	Reads primarily in three or four-word phrase groups. Some smaller groupings may be present. However, the majority of phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax of the author. Little or no expressive interpretation is present.
Level 2	Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three-or four word groupings. Some word-by-word reading may be present. Word groupings may seem awkward and unrelated to larger context of sentence or passage.
Level 1	Reads primarily word-by-word. Occasional two-word or three-word phrases may occur-but these are infrequent and/or they do not preserve meaningful syntax.

Fluency Rating of Total Participants

The first analysis performed was a fluency rating of the total participants using the fluency rating scale in Figure 1. Passages from Analytic Reading Inventory (Woods & Moe, 1995) were used as a source of reading material for the voice recordings. In the pre-test reading, the participant read one of two passages, which are identified as Form A and Form C (See Appendix C). These two passages were alternated between the students as they made themselves available to participate in the experiment. In the posttest reading, the participant read one of two passages which are identified as Form B and Form C (See Appendix C). At the posttest reading each participant read a passage different from what was read at the pretest. In order to have both posttest passages of equal grade level, Form B replaced Form A.

A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test for differences obtained from the pretest and posttest measures. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 13. The pretest score served as the covariate. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference among the three groups. The analysis on the fluency rating yielded the value of $F(2, 171) = 18.843$, $p = <.001$. The ANCOVA summary is available in Table 14.

Further analysis using the Scheffe post hoc procedure conducted at the .05 simultaneous level of significance yielded the following results:

- a. A comparison between the experimental group and the control group yielded a $t = 2.67$ which is greater than the critical $t = 2.76$.
- b. A comparison between the experimental group and the quasi-control group yielded a $t = 3.00$ which is greater than the critical $t = .76$.
- c. A comparison between the quasi-control group and the control group yielded a $t = 4.66$ which is greater than the critical $t = 2.76$.

Table 13

Means and Standard Deviations of Treatment on Fluency Rating for Total Participants

	Control Traditional Method Using Basal n=45		Quasi-Control Paired Repeated Reading n=76		Experimental Readers Theatre n=52	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pretest	2.11	0.73	2.38	.85	2.31	.76
Posttest	2.48	0.83	2.93	0.82	3.29	.61
Adj. Mean	2.586		2.878		3.274	
.999CL	2.303- 2.869		2.664- 3.092		3.001- 3.547	

Table 14

ANCOVA Summary for Fluency Rating for Total Participants

Source	SS'	DF	MS'	F	P
Between	11.947	2	5.974	18.843	<.001*
Within	54.208	171	0.317		
Total	66.155	173			

*.999 F_{2,171} = 7.194

Fluency Rating of Section AC

An analysis was performed using the fluency rating of those students in Section AC. These students read Form A in the pretest and Form C in the posttest (See Appendix C). The fluency rating scale in Figure 1 was used to score the passages. Passages from Analytic Reading Inventory (Woods & Moe, 1995) were used as a source of reading material for the voice recordings.

A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test for differences obtained from the pretest and posttest measures. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 15. The pretest score served as the covariate. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference among the three groups. The analysis on the fluency rating yielded the value of $F(2, 88) = 10.65$, $p < .001$. The ANCOVA summary is available in Table 16.

The Scheffe post hoc procedure conducted at the .05 simultaneous level of significance yielded the following results:

- a. A comparison between the experimental group and the control group yielded a $t = 4.16$ which is greater than the critical $t = 2.77$.
- b. A comparison between the experimental group and the quasi-control group yielded a $t = 6.53$ which is greater than the critical $t = 2.77$.
- c. A comparison between the quasi-control group and the control group yielded a $t = 6.30$ which is greater than the critical $t = 2.77$.

Table 15

Means and Standard Deviations of Treatment on Fluency Rating for Section AC

	Control Traditional Method Using Basal n=24		Quasi-Control Paired Repeated Reading n=38		Experimental Readers Theatre n=30	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pretest	2	0.834	2.631	0.785	2.267	0.828
Posttest	2.375	0.969	3.136	0.741	3.3	0.600
Adj. Mean	2.58		2.96		3.35	
.999CL	2.099- 3.061		2.616- 3.304		2.869- 3.831	

Table 16

ANCOVA Summary for Fluency Rating for Section AC

Source	SS'	DF	MS'	F	P
Between	7.47	2	3.74	10.65	<.001*
Within	30.87	88	0.35		
Total	38.34				

* .999 F_{2,88}=7.478

Fluency Rating of Section CB

A statistical analysis was performed using the fluency rating of those students in Section CB. These students read Form C in the pretest and Form B in the posttest (See Appendix C). The fluency rating scale in Table A-1 was used to score the oral reading passages. Passages from Analytic Reading Inventory (Woods & Moe, 1995) were used as a source of reading material for the voice recordings.

A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test for differences obtained from the pretest and posttest measures. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 17. The pretest score served as the covariate. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference among the three groups. The analysis on the fluency rating yielded the value of $F(2, 78) = 4.04$, $p = .025$. The ANCOVA summary of the fluency rating for Section CB is found in Table 18.

The Scheffe post hoc procedure conducted at a .05 simultaneous level of significance yielded the following results for Section CB.

- a. A comparison between the experimental group and the control group yielded a $t = 6.00$ which is greater than the critical $t = 2.78$.
- b. A comparison between the experimental group and the quasi-control group yielded a $t = 4.70$ which is greater than the critical $t = 2.78$.

- c. A comparison between the quasi-control group and the control group yielded a $t = 2.30$ which is less than the critical $t = 2.78$.

Table 17

Means and Standard Deviations of Treatment on Fluency Rating for Section CB

	Control Traditional Method Using Basal n=24		Quasi-Control Paired Repeated Reading n=38		Experimental Readers Theatre n=30	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pretest	2.217	0.600	2.131	0.844	2.363	0.658
Posttest	2.565	0.662	2.737	0.860	3.272	0.631
Adj. Mean	2.570		2.800		3.172	
.975CL	2.540- 2.600		2.591- 3.009		2.843- 3.497	

Table 18

ANCOVA Summary for Fluency Rating for Section CB

Source	SS'	DF	MS'	F	P
Between	2.36	2	1.18	4.04	.0282*
Within	22.77	78	0.29		
Total	25.13				

* .975 F_{2,78} = 3.869

Oral Reading Word Accuracy for Section AC

Word accuracy was measured by the number of oral miscues demonstrated by the participants subtracted from the total number of words in the passage. Oral miscues included word omissions, insertions, substitutions, aided words, repetitions, and reversals.

A one-way analysis of covariance was used to test for differences obtained from the pretest and posttest measure of those participants who read Form A in the pretest and Form C in the posttest. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 19. The pretest score served as the covariate. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference among the three groups. The analysis on the word accuracy measure yielded the value of $F(2, 88) = 6.53$, $p < .01$. The ANCOVA summary of word accuracy for Section AC is found in Table 20.

The Scheffé post hoc procedure conducted at the .05 simultaneous level of significance yielded the following results:

- a. A comparison between the experimental group and the control group yielded a $t = 13.72$ which is greater than the critical $t = 2.77$.
- b. A comparison between the experimental group and the quasi-control group yielded a $t = 5.33$ which is greater than the critical $t = 2.77$.
- c. A comparison between the quasi-control group and the control group yielded a $t = 8.39$ which is greater than the critical $t = 2.77$.

Table 19

Means and Standard Deviations of Treatment on Oral Reading Word Accuracy of Section AC (WA)

	<u>Control</u> Traditional Method Using Basal n=24		Quasi-Control Repeated Paired Reading n=38		Experimental Readers Theatre n=30	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pretest	124.791	11.344	129.237	7.434	128.133	7.811
Posttest	133.000	9.146	138.079	5.720	139.267	3.731
Adj. Mean	134.520		137.293		139.051	
.99CL	131.934- 137.108		135.362- 139.218		136.839- 141.261	

Table 20

ANCOVA Summary for Oral Reading Word Accuracy for Section AC (WA)

Source	SS'	DF	MS'	F	<i>p</i>
Between	255.380	2	127.69	6.53	.002
Within	1721.817	88	19.567		
Total	1977.197				

*.99F_{2,88}=4.855

Word Accuracy for Section CB

A one-way analysis of covariance was used to test for differences in word accuracy obtained from the pretest and posttest measure of those participants who read Form C in the pretest and Form B in the posttest. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 21. The pretest score served as the covariate. The results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference among the three groups. The analysis on the word accuracy of Section CB yielded the value of $F(2, 79) = 0.59, p = >.05$. The ANCOVA summary of word accuracy for Section AC is found in Table 22.

Table 21

Means and Standard Deviations of Treatment on Oral Reading Word Accuracy of Section CB (WA)

	Control Traditional Method Using Basal n=23		Quasi-Control Repeated Paired Reading n=38		Experimental Readers Theatre n=22	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pretest	135.565	5.016	131.974	8.930	137.000	5.529
Posttest	137.565	3.513	135.158	9.184	139.818	3.319
Adj. Mean	136.172		136.734		138.000	
.95CL	134.676- 138.744		135,172- 138.288		135,910- 140.100	

Table 22

ANCOVA Summary for Oral Reading Word Accuracy for Section CB (WA)

Source	SS'	DF	MS'	F	<i>p</i>
Between	26.393	2	13.197	0.59	>0.556*
Within	1740.293	79	22.03		
Total	1766.680	81			

*.95 $F_{2, 79}=3.112$

Oral Reading Rate for Section AC (WPM)

Reading rate was measured by the number of words in the passage multiplied by 60 and divided by the number of seconds in which the participant read the passage. A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test for differences in reading rate (WPM) obtained in the pretest and posttest measures for participants who read Form A in the pretest and Form C in the posttest. The pretest score served as the covariate. The means and standard deviations are found in Table 23.

The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference among the three groups. The analysis on the reading rate of Section AC yielded the value of $F(2, 88) = 13.07$, $p = <.001$. The ANCOVA summary of reading rate for Section AC is found in Table 24.

The Scheffe post hoc procedure conducted at the .05 simultaneous level of significance yielded the following results:

- a. A comparison between the experimental group and the control group yielded a $t = 14.67$ which is greater than the critical $t = 2.77$.
- b. A comparison between the experimental group and the quasi-control group yielded a $t = 13.36$ which is greater than the critical $t = 2.77$.

- c. A comparison between the quasi-control group and the control group yielded a $t = 4.94$ which is greater than $t = 2.77$.

Table 23

Means and Standard Deviations of Treatment on Oral Reading Rate for
Section AC (WPM)

	Control Traditional Method Using Basal n=24		Quasi-Control Repeated Paired Reading n=38		Experimental Readers Theatre n=30	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pretest	87.041	31.139	110.071	31.454	99.403	28.339
Posttest	98.669	33.867	126.106	31.658	129.729	28.333
Adj. Mean	111.081		117.451		130.820	
.999CL	99.682- 122.478		109.188- 125.763		121.329- 140.311	

Table 24

ANCOVA Summary for Oral Reading Rate for Section AC (WPM)

Source	SS'	DF	MS'	F	<i>p</i>
Between	5369.961	2	2684.48	13.07	<0.001*
Within	18072.322	88	205.37		
Total	23441.283				

*.999F_{2,88}=7.480

Oral Reading Rate (WPM) for Section CB

A one-way analysis of covariance was used to test for differences obtained in reading rate (WPM) from the pretest and posttest measure of those participants who read Form C in the pretest and Form B in the posttest. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 25. The pretest score served as the covariate. The results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference among the three groups. The analysis on the reading rate of Section CB yielded the value of $F(2, 79) = 2.28, p = .109$. The ANCOVA summary of reading rate (WPM) for Section CB is found in Table 26.

Table 25

Means and Standard Deviations of Treatment on Oral Reading Rate for
Section CB (WPM)

	Control Traditional Method Using Basal n=23		Quasi-Control Repeated Paired Reading n=38		Experimental Readers Theatre n=22	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pretest	98.216	20.347	130.889	35.650	112.640	29.203
Posttest	109.990	20.439	116.459	39.424	132.909	29.079
Adj. Mean	124.53		117.15		125.55	

Table 26

ANCOVA Summary for Oral Reading Rate for Section CB (WPM)

Source	SS'	DF	MS'	F	<i>p</i>
Between	1253.295	2	626.748	2.28	0.109
Within	21722.978	79	274.974		
Total	22976.273				

*.95 F_{2,79}=3.112

Discussion

In these additional analyses, the statistical analysis using a one-way ANCOVA did demonstrate statistically significant findings in the overall fluency rating using the NAEP fluency rating scale (White, 1995). It also demonstrated additional statistically significant findings in word accuracy and reading rate. The statistically significant main effects were determined by using the Scheffe.

Fluency

Fluency Rating

Fluency Rating of Total Participants

A one-way analysis of covariance revealed that there was a statistically significant difference among the three groups when analyzing the voice recordings for an overall fluency rating. The reader acquired a specific rating depending on whether the passage was read in phrases of two or more words. Reading with or without expression and with no, little or some expressive interpretation also influenced the rating.

Further analysis using the Scheffe procedure revealed that students who received Readers Theatre demonstrated significant gains when compared to both the quasi-control group (repeated paired reading) and the control group (traditional method). In addition the quasi-control group demonstrated significant gains when compared to the control group.

Fluency Rating Section AC

The one-way analysis of covariance indicated that a statistically significant difference existed among the three groups of participants who read Form A as the pretest reading and Form C as the posttest reading. The Scheffe revealed that students who received Readers Theatre demonstrated significant gains when compared to both the quasi-control group (repeated paired reading) and the control group (traditional method). In addition the quasi-control group demonstrated significant gains when compared to the control group.

Fluency Rating Section CB

The one-way analysis of covariance indicated that a statistically significant difference existed among the three groups of participants who read Form C as their pretest reading and Form B as their posttest reading. The Scheffe revealed that students who received Readers Theatre demonstrated significant gains when compared to both the quasi-control group (repeated paired reading) and the control group (traditional method). However, in these groups the quasi-control group did not demonstrate significant gains when compared to the control group.

Word Accuracy (WA)

Word Accuracy Section AC

The one-way analysis of covariance indicated that a statistically significant difference existed among the three groups who read Form A as the pretest passage and read Form C as the posttest passage. The Scheffe revealed that the students who received the Readers Theatre treatment demonstrated significant gains when compared to both the quasi-control group and control group. Furthermore, the students who received the repeated paired reading treatment demonstrated significant gains over the control group.

Word Accuracy Section CB

The one-way analysis of covariance indicated there was no significant difference in word accuracy among the three groups of participants who read Form C as their pretest passage and Form B as their posttest passage.

Reading Rate (WPM)

Reading Rate Section AC

A one way analysis of covariance indicated there was a significant difference in reading rate among the three groups of participants who read Form A as their pretest passage and Form C as their posttest passage. The Scheffe indicated that the students who participated in Readers Theatre demonstrated significant gains when compared to the quasi-control group as well as the control group. In addition, the quasi-control group demonstrated significant gains when compared to the control group.

Reading Rate Section CB

The one-way analysis of covariance indicated there was no significant difference in reading rate among the three groups of participants who read Form C as their pretest passage and Form B as their posttest passage.

Conclusion

Readers Theatre provides the reader with an opportunity to repeatedly read the script for several days. Due to the nature of Readers Theatre, the reader attempts to read with expression and feeling using intonation, volume, pitch, and stress. As the reader does this, he is able to read the text as the author meant it to be read—to read as one talks. Through this oral reading activity, the students who participated in Readers Theatre had the opportunity of hearing the teacher or classmate read the script using syntactic, semantic, morphological, and contextual features to compensate for the lack of prosodic information, such as graphic markers in the text. Readers Theatre provides an opportunity for the student to develop parsing strategies which eventually allows the reader to read with greater ease and understanding.

The students receiving the Readers Theatre and paired repeated reading treatments demonstrated significant gains in both word accuracy and reading rate. The participants receiving the Readers Theatre (RT) treatment were exposed to the same words for one week or longer. This provided them an opportunity to increase their sight word vocabulary and improve their word recognition skills. The students who received repeated paired reading (PR) treatment also benefited from daily oral

reading. Both the RT group and the PR group had the advantage of reading with expression, experimenting with parsing strategies, using prosodic cueing, and expanding their sight word vocabulary.

The students in the control group of Section AC did not routinely read orally. They were not exposed to the same reading material for several days and not given the opportunity to read dramatically experimenting with inflection, tone, volume, or pitch.

On the other hand the students in Section CB did not demonstrate the gains as was revealed in Section AC. These students receiving RT and PR treatments read orally for the same amount of time as their classmates who were in Section AC. The students receiving the RT treatment read the same scripts as their classmates and therefore practiced reading dramatically.

Even though great concern was taken to provide passages of equal “readability levels” at the posttest time, some of the differences or lack of differences may lie in the passages themselves. Woods & Moe (1995) indicated Form A had a readability level of 3.4, according to the Spache readability formula. Further analysis using the Harris-Jacobson readability formula (Harris & Sipay, 1990) revealed a predicted score of 5.52. The predicted level for Form B was 4.63 and for Form C was 4.78 according to the Harris-Jacobson readability formula (Woods & Moe).

Further investigation, using the Dale-Chall readability formula revealed Form A had a readability level of 4.665; Form B had a readability level of 4.308; and Form C had a readability level of 4.200 (Dale & Chall, 1948). Recognizing that readability

formulas vary in their ability to determine a readability level, it appears as though Form A may have been a harder passage to read. See Table 27 for a comparison of the three passages.

Keeping in mind that Form A may have been the harder passage, the students who read this passage may have committed more miscues and taken longer to read the passage in the pretest setting. Therefore, when they read Form C at the posttest, the passage with the lowest readability level according to Dale & Chall (1948), this may have presented them with an additional advantage of reading faster and more accurately. This coupled with the daily oral reading activity, allowing the reader to developing parsing strategies and automaticity may accommodate for the significant gains in all levels of fluency for those participants receiving the Readers Theatre or paired repeated reading treatments.

Along this same line, the students in Section CB read the easiest passage as their pretest. This would suggest that they were able to read the pretest passage with greater speed and greater accuracy giving them a higher pretest score. Then when they read a passage of almost equal readability, according to the Harris-Jacobson (Harris & Sipay, 1990) and Dale-Chall (Dale & Chall, 1948) readability formulas, their gains were not as marked and the analysis yielded no statistically significant difference among the groups.

Table 27

Analysis of Passages Read to Measure Fluency

(Dale & Chall, 1948; Harris & Sipay, 1990; Woods & Moe, 1995)

<u>Form</u>	<u>Grade Level</u>	<u>Number of words</u>	<u>Number of different words</u>	<u>Number of Sentences</u>	<u>Words per sentence</u>	<u>Predicted Score Harris-Jacobson</u>	<u>Read-ability Level Spache</u>	<u>Read-ability Level</u>
	(Woods & Moe)	(Woods & Moe)	(Woods & Moe)	(Woods & Moe)	(Woods & Moe)	(*Harris & Sipay) (Woods & Moe)	(Woods & Moe)	(Dale & Chall)
A- ¹ Pretest	3	138	94	12	12	5.52*	3.4	4.665
C- ² Pretest	4	144	95	13	11	4.78		4.200
B ² Posttest	4	144	87	12	12	4.63		4.308
C- ¹ Posttest	4	144	95	13	11	4.78		4.200

¹Students who read Form A in the pretest read form C in the posttest (Section AC).²Students who read Form C in the pretest read form B in the posttest (Section CB).

Appendix B

Permission Slips Used in the Experiment

The Effects of Readers Theatre on the Fluency and Comprehension Readers Theatre Method

Introduction: I, Lila Carrick, will be conducting research to fulfill the requirements for a doctoral dissertation in reading at Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA. This research will be conducted in your child's classroom for a twelve-week period, during the first and second marking period of this school year.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to learn more about increasing students' fluency (reading rate and reading accuracy) and comprehension by comparing three reading strategies. The three strategies compared will be using the textbook and/or supplemental materials, paired repeated reading and Readers Theatre. Readers Theatre involves rereading play scripts in the classroom. Paired repeated reading involves reading with a partner. The three methods of instruction will occur for the same amount of time every day. Parents/Guardians may examine the test materials and results. They may visit the classroom to observe the instruction methods.

Description of Procedures: On two occasions, once before and again after the twelve-week instruction period, your child will be asked to take a standardized reading test and read orally, for less than five minutes, into a tape recorder.

Risk and discomforts: There are no known or expected risks from participating in this study except for the mild anticipation or frustration associated with test taking and/or reading orally in the presence of others.

Benefits: Your child may benefit directly from participating in this study. Your child may demonstrate improved reading rate, reading word accuracy and/or reading comprehension. The knowledge gained may benefit others.

Contact Person: For more information about this research, you may contact Lila Carrick or Gloria Williams at 908-753-3283.

Confidentiality: Any information obtained, as a result of this research will be kept confidential.

Voluntary Participation: Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your child from the study at any time. Refusal to participate or withdraw from the study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to you or your child. Participation indicates that your child will participate in taking a standardized test in reading comprehension and being taped while reading into a tape recorder. Your child will continue to receive reading instruction as planned by the classroom teacher. The tape-recorded reading will be less than five minutes in length.

Permission: If you agree to have your child participate in this study, you do not have to return this form.

If you do not want to have your child participate in this study, please sign and return this form to Mrs. Carrick.

I _____, have read this form and do not want my child, _____, to participate in this study.

Upon signing this form I will receive a copy.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

The Effects of Readers Theatre on the Fluency and Comprehension
Traditional Method of Instruction Using a Textbook and Supplemental Materials

Introduction: I, Lila Carrick, will be conducting research to fulfill the requirements for a doctoral dissertation in reading at Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA. This research will be conducted in your child's classroom for a twelve-week period, during the first and second marking period of this school year.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to learn more about increasing students' fluency (reading rate and reading accuracy) and comprehension by comparing three reading strategies. The three strategies compared will be using the textbook and/or supplemental materials, paired repeated reading and Readers Theatre. Readers Theatre involves rereading play scripts in the classroom. Paired repeated reading involves reading with a partner. The three methods of instruction will occur for the same amount of time every day. Parents/Guardians may examine the test materials and results. They may visit the classroom to observe the instruction methods.

Description of Procedures: On two occasions, once before and again after the twelve-week instruction period, your child will be asked to take a standardized reading test and read orally, for less than five minutes, into a tape recorder.

Risk and discomforts: There are no known or expected risks from participating in this study except for the mild anticipation or frustration associated with test taking and/or reading orally in the presence of others.

Benefits: Your child may benefit directly from participating in this study. Your child may demonstrate improved reading rate, reading word accuracy and/or reading comprehension. The knowledge gained may benefit others.

Contact Person: For more information about this research, you may contact Lila Carrick at 908-753-3283.

Confidentiality: Any information obtained, as a result of this research will be kept confidential.

Voluntary Participation: Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your child from the study at any time. Refusal to participate or withdraw from the study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to you or your child. Participation indicates that your child will participate in taking a standardized test in reading comprehension and being taped while reading into a tape recorder. Your child will continue to receive reading instruction as planned by the classroom teacher. The tape-recorded reading will be less than five minutes in length.

Permission: If you agree to have your child participate in this study, you do not have to return this form.

If you do not want to have your child participate in this study, please sign and return this form to Mrs. Carrick.

I _____, have read this form and do not want my child,
_____, to participate in this study. Upon signing this
form I will receive a copy.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

The Effects of Readers Theatre on the Fluency and Comprehension Paired Reading Method

Introduction: I, Lila Carrick, will be conducting research to fulfill the requirements for a doctoral dissertation in reading at Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA. This research will be conducted in your child's classroom for a twelve-week period, during the first and second marking period of this school year.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to learn more about increasing students' fluency (reading rate and reading accuracy) and comprehension by comparing three reading strategies. The three strategies compared will be using the textbook and/or supplemental materials, paired repeated reading and Readers Theatre. Readers Theatre involves rereading play scripts in the classroom. Paired repeated reading involves reading with a partner. The three methods of instruction will occur for the same amount of time every day. Parents/Guardians may examine the test materials and results. They may visit the classroom to observe the instruction methods.

Description of Procedures: On two occasions, once before and again after the twelve-week instruction period, your child will be asked to take a standardized reading test and read orally, for less than five minutes, into a tape recorder.

Risk and discomforts: There are no known or expected risks from participating in this study except for the mild anticipation or frustration associated with test taking and/or reading orally in the presence of others.

Benefits: Your child may benefit directly from participating in this study. Your child may demonstrate improved reading rate, reading word accuracy and/or reading comprehension. The knowledge gained may benefit others.

Contact Person: For more information about this research, you may contact Lila Carrick at 908-753-3283.

Confidentiality: Any information obtained, as a result of this research will be kept confidential.

Voluntary Participation: Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your child from the study at any time. Refusal to participate or withdraw from the study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to you or your child. Participation indicates that your child will participate in taking a standardized test in reading comprehension and being taped while reading into a tape recorder. Your child will continue to receive reading instruction as planned by the classroom teacher. The tape-recorded reading will be less than five minutes in length.

Permission: If you agree to have your child participate in this study, you do not have to return this form.

If you do not want to have your child participate in this study, please sign and return this form to Mrs. Carrick.

I _____, have read this form and do not want my child,
_____, to participate in this study. Upon signing this
form I will receive a copy.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix C

Passages Used in Pre-Experiment Testing (Woods & Moe, 1995)

Form A (Pretest A)

Joe sat down on the sidewalk in front of the trading post with his buckskin jacket thrown over his shoulder. He felt worried because it was difficult to know what to do.

“Grandfather told me never to sell these blue beads. He said they would bring me good fortune and good health. Grandfather is a wise and understanding man. He is proud to be a Native American. He remembers when his grandfather gave him these same beads. He has often told me many interesting stories of how his grandfather rode horses and hunted buffalo on the plains.”

Joe held the string of beads high into the air toward the sunlight. “These are perfectly beautiful beads,” he said out loud. “I can’t sell them because I too am proud of my great past. Yes, I will keep the beads.

Form C (Pretest B)

The three were growing tired from their long journey, and now they had to cross a river. It was wide and deep, so they would have to swim across.

The younger dog plunged into the icy water barking for the others to follow him. The older dog jumped into the water. He was weak and suffering from pain, but somehow he managed to struggle to the opposite bank.

The poor cat was left all alone. He was so afraid that he ran up and down the bank wailing with fear. The younger dog swam back and forth trying to help. Finally, the cat jumped and began swimming near his friend.

At that moment something bad happened. An old beaver dam from upstream broke. The water came rushing downstream hurling a large log toward the animals. It struck the cat and swept him helplessly away.

Passages Used in Post-Experiment Testing
(Woods & Moe, 1995)

Form C
(Posttest B)

The three were growing tired from their long journey, and now they had to cross a river. It was wide and deep, so they would have to swim across.

The younger dog plunged into the icy water barking for the others to follow him. The older dog jumped into the water. He was weak and suffering from pain, but somehow he managed to struggle to the opposite bank.

The poor cat was left all alone. He was so afraid that he ran up and down the bank wailing with fear. The younger dog swam back and forth trying to help. Finally, the cat jumped and began swimming near his friend.

At that moment something bad happened. An old beaver dam from upstream broke. The water came rushing downstream hurling a large log toward the animals. It struck the cat and swept him helplessly away.

Form B
(Posttest A)

Jody was so worried that he didn't even care to eat. He had stayed in the barn all day to take care of his sick pony Gabilan. The pony's condition was growing worse as his breathing grew louder and harder.

At nightfall Jody brought a blanket from the house so he could sleep near Gabilan. In the middle of the night a wind whipped around the barn and blew the door open.

At dawn Jody awakened to the banging of the barn door. Gabilan was gone! In alarm he ran from the barn following the pony's tracks. Looking upward he saw buzzards, the birds of death, flying overhead. Jody stood still, then ran to the top of a small hill. In a clearing below, he saw something that filled his heart with anger and hate. A buzzard was perched on his dying pony's head.

Appendix D

Reference of Scripts Used in Experiment

Blau, L. (1994). "Our Spectacular Solar System." In, Super science, (pp. 25-30). Bellevue, WA: One From the Heart Educational Resources.

Crisco, B. L., & Lanasa, P. J. (1995). Fairy tales for two readers. Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas Press.

Haven, K. (1996). "Launching A Scientist." In, Great moments in science, (pp. 169-177). Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas Press.

Haven, K. (1996). "The Fall of Galileo." In, Great moments in science, (pp. 23-30). Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas Press.

Homer. (1996). The Odyssey. (S. Snyder, adapt.). Logan, IA: Perfection Learning Corporation. (Original work created 900 BC)

Shakespeare, W. (1995). A midsummer night's dream. (R. Carver, adapt.) Logan, IA: Perfection Learning Corporation. (Original work written 1594-1595).

Shepard, A. (1995). "The Gifts of the Wali Dad: A Tale of India and Pakistan." In Arron's RT Page (on-line). Available: <http://www.aaronshep.com/rt/RTE07.html>

Oral Reading Guide
(Crisco & Lanasa, 1995)

How Did I Read?

Did I read loud enough to be heard by the members in my group or by the audience?

Did I read clearly?

Did I pronounce the words correctly?

Did I read in phrases, groups or chunks of words?

Did I “read” the punctuation marks?

Did I read at the right or appropriate pace or tempo?

Did I read with expression, emotion and/or feeling so that my audience or partner could better understand what was happening in the story?

Appendix F

Permission Slip for Pilot Study

The Effects of Readers Theatre on the Fluency and Comprehension

Introduction: I, Lila Carrick, will be conducting research to fulfill the requirements for a doctoral dissertation in reading at Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA. This research will be conducted in your child's classroom for a six-week period, during the third marking period of this school year.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to learn more about increasing students' fluency (reading rate, reading accuracy, and ease of reading) and comprehension by comparing two reading strategies. The two strategies compared will be reading from the textbook and Readers Theatre. Readers Theatre involves rereading play scripts in the classroom. The two methods of instruction will occur for the same amount of time every day. Parents/Guardians may examine the test materials and results. They will be given an opportunity to visit the classroom to observe the instruction methods.

Description of Procedures: On two occasions, once before and again after the six-week instruction period, your child will be asked to take a standardized reading test and read orally, for less than five minutes, into a tape recorder.

Risk and discomforts: There are no known or expected risks from participating in this study except for the mild anticipation or frustration associated with test taking.

Benefits: Your child may benefit directly from participating in this study. The knowledge gained may benefit others.

Contact Person: For more information about this research, you may contact Lila Carrick or Gloria Williams at 908-753-3283.

Confidentiality: Any information obtained, as a result of this research will be kept confidential.

Voluntary Participation: Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your child from the study at any time. Refusal to participate or withdraw from the study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to you or your child. Participation indicates that your child will participate in taking a standardized test in reading comprehension and being taped while reading into a tape recorder. The tape-recorded reading will be less than five minutes in length.

Permission: If you agree to have your child participate in this study, you do not have to return this form.

If you do not want to have your child participate in this study, please sign and return this form to Mrs. Carrick.

I _____, have read this form and do not want my child,
_____, to participate in this study. Upon signing this
form I will receive a copy.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix G

References of Scripts Used in Pilot Study

Grade 3

Braun, W. (1996). "The Ant and the Grasshopper." In W. Braun & C. Braun, A readers theatre treasury of stories. (pp. 49-53). Calgary, AL: Braun & Braun Educational Enterprises Ltd.

Braun, W. (1996). "Belling the Cat." In W. Braun & C. Braun, A readers theatre treasury of stories. (pp. 28-31). Calgary, AL: Braun & Braun Educational Enterprises Ltd.

Braun, W. (1996). "The Fox and the Goat." In W. Braun & C. Braun, A readers theatre treasury of stories. (pp. 40-43). Calgary, AL: Braun & Braun Educational Enterprises Ltd.

Braun, W. (1996). "The Fox Without a Tail." In W. Braun & C. Braun, A readers theatre treasury of stories. (pp. 54-57). Calgary, AL: Braun & Braun Educational Enterprises Ltd.

Braun, W. (1996). "The Goose That Laid the Golden Egg." In W. Braun & C. Braun, A readers theatre treasury of stories. (pp. 44-48). Calgary, AL: Braun & Braun Educational Enterprises Ltd.

Braun, W. (1996). "The Lion and the Mouse." In W. Braun & C. Braun, A readers theatre treasury of stories. (pp. 32-35). Calgary, AL: Braun & Braun Educational Enterprises Ltd.

Braun, W. (1996). "The Miller, The Boy, and the Donkey." In W. Braun & C. Braun, A readers theatre treasury of stories, (pp. 36-39). Calgary, AL: Braun & Braun Educational Enterprises Ltd.

King-Smith, D. (1995). "Babe: A little pig goes a long way." (J. Klion, adapt.). Storyworks, 3, (1), 18-23. (Originally published as Babe: The gallant pig in 1985).

Siebert, Diane. (1995). Heartland. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Grade 4

Blau, L. (1994). "The Lion's Share." In, Favorite folktales and fabulous fables, (pp. 71-82). Bellevue, WA: One From the Heart Educational Resources.

Blau, L. (1994). "The Lion's Tail." In, Favorite folktales and fabulous fables, (pp. 11-16). Bellevue, WA: One From the Heart Educational Resources.

Blau, L. (1994). "Our Spectacular Solar System." In, Super science, (pp. 25-30). Bellevue, WA: One From the Heart Educational Resources.

Glasscock, S. (1995). "1773-The Boston Tea Party: The Night Boston Harbor Turned into a Giant Teapot." In, 10 American history plays for the classroom, (pp. 26-34). New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Sachar, L. (1993). "Three Wayside Stories." In A. Shepard, Stories on stage: Scripts for readers theatre, (pp. 42-51). New York, NY: H. W. Wilson. (Originally published in 1985).

Grade 5

Crisco, B. L., & Lanasa, P. J. (1995). Fairy tales for two readers.

Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas Press.

Homer. (1996). The Odyssey. (S. Snyder, adapt.). Logan, IA: Perfection

Learning Corporation. (Original work created 900 BC)

Shakespeare, W. (1995). A midsummer night's dream. (R. Carver, adapt.)

Logan, IA: Perfection Learning Corporation. (Original work written 1594-1595).

Appendix H

Passages Used in Pilot Study (Woods & Moe, 1995)

Grade 3

Readability Level 2.5

Whiz! The baseball went right by me, and I struck at the air!

“Strike one,” called the man. I could feel my legs begin to shake!

Whiz! The ball went by me again, and I began to feel bad. “Strike two,” screamed the man.

I held the bat back because this time I would kill the ball! I would hit it right out of the park! I was so scared that I bit down on my lip. My knees shook and my hands grew wet.

Swish! The ball came right over the plate. Crack! I hit it a good one! Then I ran like the wind. Everyone was yelling for me because I was now a baseball star!

Grade 3

Readability Level 3.2

The sunlight shined into the mouth of the cave so Mark could see easily at first, but the farther he walked, the darker it grew. His dog, Boxer, ran off to explore on his own.

Soon it grew so dark that Mark could see nothing, but he could hear water dripping off the cave walls. He touched a wall with his hand to find it cold and damp. Mark began to grow fearful, so he lit his candle and held it high to look around.

Suddenly, the flame went out. He heard a low growl near him and saw a pair of fierce, green eyes glowing in the dark! He tried to relight the candle, but the first match went out! Finally, Mark’s shaking hand held the lighted candle high.

“Boxer!” he shouted. “Now I recognize those green eyes of yours! Let’s get out of here!”

Grade 4

Joe sat down on the sidewalk in front of the trading post with his buckskin jacket thrown over his shoulder. He felt worried because it was difficult to know what to do.

“Grandfather told me never to sell these blue beads. He said they would bring me good fortune and good health. Grandfather is a wise and understanding man. He is proud to be a Native American. He remembers when his grandfather gave him these same beads. He has often told me many interesting stories of how his grandfather rode horses and hunted buffalo on the plains.”

Joe held the string of beads high into the air toward the sunlight. “These are perfectly beautiful beads,” he said out loud. “I can’t sell them because I too am proud of my great past. Yes, I will keep the beads.

Grade 5

Joel’s Pa was storming mad! Joel Goss had journeyed far with the schoolmaster to help him collect some money, and now they had returned not with money but with two colts! His father was furious.

The news had spread throughout the county that one of the colts was very small, and people had already begun to laugh. Joel had hoped to calm his father’s anger by convincing him of Little Bub’s strength, but Mr. Goss was still raging with anger! He pounded his fist on the table shouting several commands! The schoolmaster must find another place to live! The colts could not stay on the property!

Then he turned to Joel. It was time that Joel leave his house and find a job. In the morning they would visit Miller Chase and ask him to take Joel to work in the sawmill. Joel felt shocked and hurt! How could he leave his own house and Little Bub?

Appendix I

How Well Did I Read? (Koskinen & Blum, 1986)

Name _____

Partner _____

Date _____

	Fantastic	Good	Fair	Not So Good	Terrible
After First Reading					
After Second Reading					
After Third Reading					

Comments:

Appendix J

Listening Evaluation Form
(Koskinen & Blum, 1986)

Reader _____

Listener _____

Date _____

In what ways did your partner's reading improve?

My partner knew more words _____

My partner read more smoothly _____

My partner read with more expression _____

Name at least one thing that indicates that your partner's reading has improved and share this with your partner.

Comments:

Appendix K
Assessment Forms
(Dixon, Davies, & Politano, 1996)

Group Self-Report
Readers Theatre

Date _____

Working together is _____

I enjoy working together when _____

I don't enjoy working together when _____

A problem we had today was _____

We solved the problem by _____

I sometimes wish my group would/could _____

I would like my teacher and/or Mrs. Carrick to know this about working together

Fluency Rating Form
(Dixon, Davies, & Politano, 1996)

Student _____ Date _____

Script _____

Volume	weak, too soft	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	strong loud
Clarity	unclear	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	clear
Posture	poor posture (leans on object, rocks)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	good posture (stands straight, stands still)
Intonation	monotone	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	uses pitch, stress, emotions, inflections
Tempo	too fast	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	appropriate rate
Punctuation	ignores punctuation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	reads puncutation markers
Script	covers face with script, fidgets with script	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	holds script at appropriate level,

Comments:

Student Self-Report Form
Readers Theatre
(Dixon, Davies, & Politano, 1996)

Name _____ Date _____

Readers Theatre is _____

Today, during Readers Theatre I _____

In reading, I am really good at _____

I need to improve at _____

I plan to improve by _____

Things I like about Readers Theatre are _____

Things I don't like about Readers Theatre are _____

I would like my teacher and/or Mrs. Carrick to know the following about my

experience with Readers Theatre _____

Character Assessment
Readers Theatre
(Dixon, Davies, & Politano, 1996)

Name _____ Date _____

Script _____

Role or character _____

I learned several things about my character. These include _____

In the beginning of the play my character feels _____

At the end of the play my character feels _____

This change came about because _____

If I could talk to my character, I would tell him/her/it the following _____

Draw a character map of your character. Include how he looks, acts, thinks, and feels.

Compare and contrast your character to another character in the script or to a character in another script you read in class.

Partners Self-Report
Paired Reading

Name _____ Date _____

Partner _____

Material _____ Pages _____

The best part of working together _____

I have learned that working together can be _____

We need to improve on _____

One problem we had today was _____

We solved the problem by _____

I have learned these things about my reading ability _____

I have learned these things about my listening ability _____

Student Self-Report Form
Paired Reading

Name _____ Date _____

Partner _____

Today I _____

The part about paired reading that I enjoy the most is _____

The part about paired reading that I dislike the most is _____

In reading, I think I am good at _____

I want to improve my reading especially in _____

I think I could become a better reader if I _____

Listening is _____

I would like my teacher and/or Mrs. Carrick to know _____

Reading Assessment
Paired Reading

Name _____ Date _____

Partner _____

Material _____ Page _____

I learned these things about the character in the passage I read _____

I learned these things about the character in the passage my partner read _____

The main idea of the passage I read was _____

The main idea of the passage my partner read was _____

I can summarize what I read in ten words or less _____

I can summarize what my partner read in ten words or less _____

The setting of the passage I read was _____

The setting of the passage my partner read was _____

Appendix L

Date: _____

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST READERS THEATRE

Observation	Place a check or comment in the box if the behavior was observed
The students are participating in reading scripts.	
The students are writing in journals responding to questions about participating in Readers Theatre or answering questions concerning the content of the script, such as characterization, writing a new ending to the play, sequencing events of the play, etc.	
Journals reflect students' involvement or participation in Readers Theatre	
Journals reflect students' integration of reading skills with Readers Theatre such as characterization, mapping the play, sequencing events, etc.	
Conversations with students or teacher reflect participation in Readers Theatre	
Additional comments:	
Name or initials of person completing checklist	

Date: _____

**OBSERVATION CHECKLIST
PAIRED REPEATED READING**

Observation	Place a check or comment in the box if the behavior was observed
The students are participating in paired repeated reading procedure	
The students are writing in journals responding to questions about participating in paired repeated reading or answering questions concerning the content of the script, such as characterization, summarizing the information, identifying main idea and details	
Journals reflect students' involvement or participation in paired repeated reading	
Journals reflects students' integration of reading skills with paired repeated reading such as characterization, summarizing information, identifying main idea and details	
"How Well Did I Read?" and "Listening Evaluation Form" have been completed indicating participation in paired repeated reading	
Conversations with students or teacher reflect participation in paired repeated reading	
Additional comments:	
Name or initials of person completing checklist	

Date: _____

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

METHOD USING BASAL AND/OR SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Observation	Place a check or comment in the box if the behavior was observed
The teacher and students are engaged in the direct instruction component of reading instruction	
The students are reading silently from the basal reader, trade books, or other supplemental material	
The teacher is reading aloud to the students	
The students are writing in journals responding to questions and answering questions concerning the content of the material read such as characterization, writing a new ending to the story, sequencing events of the story, etc.	
Journals reflects students' responding to story elements such as characterization, mapping the story, sequencing events, writing a new ending to the story, etc.	
Students are participating in oral reading activities	
Additional comments:	
Name or initials of person completing checklist	

Lila Ubert Carrick

Biographic Information

- Birth: Hays, Kansas—January 20, 1945
- Parents: Roderick and Eleanor Ubert

Education

- B.S. in Nursing—1968—University of Tulsa, Tulsa, Oklahoma
- M.A. in Education—1986—University of Tulsa, Tulsa, Oklahoma
- Ed. D. in Reading—2001—Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA Dissertation Topic: The Effects of Using Readers Theatre on Fluency and Comprehension in Fifth Grade Students in Regular Classrooms

Certification

- New Jersey Elementary School (K-8)
- New Jersey Reading Specialist
- New Jersey Supervisor

Employment

- Plainfield Public Schools, Plainfield, NJ (Grade 3)—1990 to present
 - Mentor for First Year Teachers and Alternate Route Teachers
 - Conducted Staff Development Presentations within Plainfield School District:
 - The New Zealand Experience
 - Alternatives to Using Worksheets
 - Using Literature to Teach Mathematics
 - Using Literature as a Springboard to Writing
 - New Teacher Orientation
 - Using Readers Theatre to Increase Reading Fluency and Comprehension
 - Using Think Alouds and Graphic Organizers to Increase Comprehension
 - Running Records
 - Family Math Instructor
 - Family Tools and Technology Instructor
 - Implemented Family Paired Reading
 - Created and Implemented Family Write Night
- Raritan Valley Community College—Adjunct Faculty-(2000)
- Far Hills Country Day School, Far Hills, NJ (Grade 4)—1988-1990
 - Family Math Instructor
- Our Lady of Fatima, Piscataway, NJ (Grade 5)—1987-1988

Grants and Awards

- Recipient of Eisenhower Grants for Math and Science—1992,1994
- Recipient of New Zealand Whole Language Study Tour Grant--1993
- Recipient of a Honeywell International Grant for Developing a Thematic Unit --1993
- Recipient of a Union Carbide Grant for Family Literacy Projects -- 1995
- Governor's Recognition Teacher of the Year—1993
- Evergreen School Teacher of the Year—1994, 1996
- Plainfield School District Teacher of the Year-- 1996

Publications

- Readers Theatre Resources—*Reading Teacher*—Date to be determined

Professional Organizations and Activities

- Phi Delta Kappa Honor Society
- Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society
- Readers Theatre Institute, San Diego, CA—London, England
 - Workshop Participant 1998, 1999
 - Faculty—July 2000
- International Reading Association
 - Presenter: International Reading Association Regional Conference-1996- Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada--Topic: Family Write Night
 - Presenter: International Reading Association Regional Conference-1999-Dover, Delaware—Topic: Using Readers Theatre in the Classroom
 - Program Proposal Reader for National Convention—1997, 1998
 - Subcommittee on Classroom Teacher Awards & Professional Development Grants
- College Reading Association
 - Presenter: College Reading Association Annual Meeting-2000-St. Petersburg, FL—Topic: How Technology Changed Literacy Learning
- New Jersey Reading Association
 - Keynote Speaker: New Jersey Reading Association -1995-Topic: Family Write Night
 - Speaker: New Jersey Reading Association Spring Conference – 2000-Topic: Using Readers Theatre in the Classroom
- Suburban Reading Council
- National Council of Teachers of English
 - Session Chair: National Council of Teachers of English Convention-1995-San Diego, CA
 - Presenter: National Council of Teachers of English Regional Conference--1996 Oklahoma City, OK-Topic: Family Write Night
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
 - Presenter: National Conference—2001-Orlando, FL-Topic: Readers Theatre: The Math, Reading, Drama Connection
 - Presenter: Regional Conference—2001-Somerset, NJ-Topic: Readers Theatre: Connecting Math, Reading, Writing, and Drama
- Presenter: New Jersey Association of Independent Schools-1990-Topic: Class Meetings--Using Class Meetings as a Classroom Management Tool

Community Service

- American Red Cross of Greater Somerset County—Board of Directors