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THE EFFECTS OF STORYTELLING ON STUDENT WRITING:
A TOOL FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER CLASSROOM

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Interdisciplinary Studies

by
Heather Margret-Marie Mead

September 2002

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Approved by:



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8/21/02

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the use of storytelling as a tool to facilitate writing in English Language Learners. It examines specifically the effects storytelling had on the student use of expressive language, story structure and creativity in their writing. It also analyzed the enjoyment level storytelling brought to the writing experience of the student.

Over a period of eleven weeks, 41 third graders participated in the study. The students were split into two groups. Prior to a writing activity, one group had a storytelling experience, using both teacher-as-storyteller and student-as-storyteller formats. The second group did not experience the storytelling component prior to the writing activity.

The students' stories were collected and compared. Readers looked for use of expressive language, story structure and creativity in each story and scored it using a specifically designed rubric. Students also completed an enjoyment level survey after the writing experience.

Findings suggest that the simple and inexpensive activity of storytelling helps all students, including

those learning English as their second language, to produce higher quality writing that contains increased instances of expressive language and more developed story structure. Storytelling is also an engaging strategy that increases the level of enjoyment for most student writers.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Teachers have quested for meaningful ways to engage their elementary students in creative writing. When the students are limited in their English language development, the teacher has the added responsibility of finding ways for students to make connections between what they know and what they are to write about. The practice of storytelling, both by elementary students and their teachers, is a proven, powerful way to facilitate writing experiences for all students, especially English Language Learners.

How does participating in storytelling experiences influence narrative writing by students who are learning English as their second language? In general, children who are learning English have experiences that are vastly different from those of their English proficient peers. If they are provided an opportunity to use those experiences, as a basis for storytelling, they will have meaningful stories to use as a basis for writing. Unfortunately, according to Cooper (1993) students have been encouraged by the school system to hide their

personal stories, or in essence, themselves. They have been rewarded for repeating back information taught by the teacher and discouraged from sharing who they are on the inside. This study explores the possibility that the rich words and imaginative stories that are a part of their "out-of-school" world can be the foundation for a strong writing program. Teachers, particularly teachers of kindergarten through third grade children, have the task of providing the foundations on which all of the students' future academic education will be placed. Learning how to read, write, and spell are taught in the primary grades so they may be used as tools to acquire knowledge in later grades. Whether the experiences of learning how to write are meaningful and engaging can determine a child's general attitude toward learning. If there exists no connection to a student's life, the love of learning may be stifled at an early age.

Since Proposition 227 in June of 1998, known as the Unz Initiative or the "English Language Education for Immigrant Children" Initiative, education for English Language Learners has been in a state of crisis in California. The wording of the proposition states, "All

children in California public schools shall be taught English by being taught in English" (Unz, 1998 p.1).

Students who are learning English as their second language are evaluated using the same tools and criteria as students who have learned English as their first language. At times, students who are learning English as a second language are at different levels of acquisition in writing skills than their English-only speaking peers. Many school districts are scrambling to find an effective way to facilitate writing for all students, but especially for those students who are learning English as a second language.

A great deal of research during the last few decades shows a trend in schools using storytelling techniques as literature instruction (Suhor, 1984). As the students in primary grade classrooms begin the acquisition of writing skills, storytelling can help to lay the foundations needed to build these skills. Storytelling helps students to develop a "sense of story." This capacity can help them in both reading and writing (Kempton and Trabasso and Van Den Broek in Aies, 1988). Storytelling is an extension of a child's self, a topic with which they are familiar. If their writing skills are just

starting to develop, then they may not be able to participate in a writing activity right away. Children can, however, successfully participate in an oral storytelling experience. As their skills permit, they can dictate stories to another individual, create pictures that tell their story, or act the story out. As their writing skills develop, they can take the foundation they acquired in storytelling and naturally transition into writing.

Bringing storytelling into the classroom also develops and strengthens the community within the classroom. Each unique story shared helps to strengthen the child's own self-image through the telling and also contributes to a "classroom community that transcends cultural language and differences" (Simich-Dudgeon, 1998, p 10). As the classrooms across the country become more diverse, the sharing of stories from these varied backgrounds can help to celebrate the differences between individuals, and also to recognize the many similarities.

This study delved into the effectiveness of storytelling as a writing tool by evaluating four outcomes considered central to quality writing. The outcomes evaluated were the use of expressive language in

writing, development of story structure, individual creativity, and level of participant enjoyment.

In order to give a sense of what is presently known in the field of storytelling and writing instruction, Chapter Two presents a synthesis of the literature in the field. It aides in understanding the significance of this study and upon what foundations it was developed. The Review of the Literature will describe the history of storytelling as an instructional tool and more specifically how storytelling relates to writing instruction.

Chapter Three describes the methodology and design of the study. It gives detailed information about the site chosen for the study. It also explains the process by which the sample population was selected and a full description of the students in the sample. The design of data collection process and the instrument used to collect the data is also discussed in this Chapter Three.

Chapter Four outlines the findings and results for each of the four outcomes. At the conclusion of the data collection, the findings were analyzed. This chapter looks at the findings from each outcome independently and is followed by a discussion of the results.

Chapter Five looks at the significance of the research, the evaluated outcomes, and the final results for a discussion of what can be concluded from the research study. Recommendations for further research and applications of the findings are explored.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In order to better understand the current practices and trends in the field of storytelling as it relates to the writing instruction of second language learners, a review of the literature was done. This review allows for a more complete grasp of what has occurred in the field prior to the study as well as the definition of some key terms:

For this study, there are several field-specific terms that must be defined in order to understand the research:

1. An English learner is a child who does not speak English or whose native language is not English and is not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English. Also known as a Limited English Proficient (LEP).
2. Storytelling is the act of orally retelling a story or an event.
3. A student's primary language is the language they first learned to speak.
4. A student's second language is a language they learned after they learned their primary language.

According to the 1998-1999 Language Census compiled for the State of California, there were 1,442,692 students designated as English Language Learners in kindergarten through the twelfth grade. Of this number, over 45% were in the grades kindergarten through third grade (California Department of Education, 1999). With the passage of the Unz Initiative in June of 1998, it has been put into law that, "...all children in California public schools shall be taught English by being taught in English. Children who are English learners shall be educated through sheltered English immersion during temporary transition period not normally to exceed one year." (1998, p. 1).

The use of storytelling strategies is a powerful way to help all learners, including learners of English, to become more proficient in the language. Barton, as cited by Cullinan (1993), viewed storytelling in the classroom as a powerful way of "developing verbal-interactive skills, as well as other language skills such as listening, reading, and writing" (p.17).

The amount of literature available that relates specifically to use of storytelling as a strategy to promote writing with English learners is relatively

limited, however, exploration into research done on storytelling and writing in classrooms not specifically designed for English learners is quite extensive. This review will examine the historical aspects of storytelling. It will also present research done in the area of storytelling as it relates to writing, and an exploration of the balance between story content and written conventions when teaching primary grade English learners to write.

History of Storytelling

Chambers (1970) explained that the history of storytelling began as a way to transfer a culture's beliefs, customs, religion, deeds, triumphs, and explanations from generation to generation. Colwell (1980) writes that there are two main categories of early storytelling. The 'Warning Example' was a story told to warn children and other members of the community away from dangers. The other was termed the 'Embroidered Exploit', which would be a factual report of a community member's deed that, through exaggeration that often accompanies frequent retelling, would end up an extraordinary story that contained mythical and

supernatural elements. In most cultures, storytellers held a respected position in their community. Although ancient storytellers were valued for the act of passing on valuable knowledge, they were also appreciated for their ability to tell stories that entertained.

According to Baker and Greene (1987) Gutenberg's printing press during the fifteenth century brought about a new trend in storytelling. In the centuries that followed, authors, such as the Brothers Grimm during the early 1800's, took on the role of folklorist with their books. During this time, they set out to record these oral stories in written form. These stories became, as Chambers labeled it, "frozen in print" (1970 p. 8). The stories were no longer the fluid, constantly changing experiences as they had been in the past. The art and practice of storytelling as it had been known began to fade. Although it became less common, Baker and Greene (1987) expressed the idea that storytelling never had become extinct, "Parents, grandparents, nannies, and other child caregivers have always told stories to amuse children...around the fireplace or when the children were tucked into bed" (p.3).

Baker and Greene (1987) further explained that in 1837 the first organized storytelling program with educational implications emerged. Froebel, the German educator who began the Kindergarten movement, made storytelling an important element of the Kindergarten curriculum. Storytelling became a part of teacher training for Kindergarten teachers. Public library programs, such as "Story Hour", followed the Kindergarten movement as a forum for storytelling. Through the invention and inclusion of more media and technology in our nation's public elementary schools, the simple and timeless act of storytelling continues to have a place in elementary school curriculum.

Storytelling once again emerged into the elementary classrooms across the country during the early 1980's. Greene (1973) expressed the opinion that, "...storytelling deserves a larger place in the...school environment than it presently occupies" (p.36). The Commission on Literature of the National Council of Teachers of English recognized and praised this rising trend (Suhor, 1984). Exposure to storytelling in the early grades can have a positive effect on children as they develop their reading and writing skills. ALEX (1988) summarized the findings of

Kempton, Trabasso and Van Den Broek in support of the use of storytelling in the classroom. She wrote,

Sharing stories can give youngsters more of a 'sense of story'—an awareness that can help them in both reading and writing. In reading, for example, a sense of story can help children predict and know what to expect, and to read with more awareness of cause and effect, sequence, and other story factors related to comprehension. (p.1).

Meaning that storytelling, a helpful tool to promote early literacy, is successful when used to aid in writing development as well. The frequent exposure to storytelling provides students experience with the "sense of story." The children learn to use this sense when creating their own stories and giving structure to their own experiences (Tway, 1985).

Storytelling as it Relates to Language Instruction

Storytelling began as oral stories that were passed down over the centuries. These stories held the keys to faith, survival, customs, and history for a culture. According to Brand and Donato (2001), "Storytelling is an effective and efficient tool that is not fully appreciated... Although its purpose may vary from those

of the past, storytelling is no less valuable an art form" (p. 10). Today, storytelling can be used in an elementary classroom as a tool to provide students, especially for English Language Learners, with concepts, language, and structure that can help them to be more proficient writers. Greene (1973) and Zipes (1995) suggest that stories are important to all ages, but are more significant to the literacy instruction of elementary aged children. Cooper (1993) stated, "Stories can be the concrete materials young children use to develop, expand and increase their language skills, much the same way they use concrete materials when building their skills in other areas, such as science, math, and art" (p.10).

Storytelling is natural to most children, it is something to which they have been exposed to from the time they were very young (Cullinan, as cited by Simich-Dudgeon, 1998). Scott (1985) claimed that one of the many benefits of storytelling is that it provides children with examples of story patterns, themes, and characters that help them in their own writing. Denman (1991) writes that stories feed a child's natural enjoyment of language.

Storytelling can be the connection that provides children with language development, both in reading and writing. In accordance with the research of Brand and Donato (2001), among the purposes of modern storytelling are understanding of storyline and the development of receptive and expressive language. Through the participation in storytelling, students can increase their awareness of storyline as well as their written, read, and spoken vocabulary. Greene (1973) states that stories not only pique a student's interest, but show benefit "...in the qualitative improvement of their own powers of expression" (p.37).

Storytelling also provides a high level of motivation for the student to write. Cooper (1993), relating her experiences as a relatively new kindergarten teacher, found that the phonics-based reading and writing curriculum was not engaging. The children did not view themselves as having real reading or writing experiences. She further expressed the opinion that sharing stories held a high interest for all students, regardless of race or background. She saw in her students that the interest in the stories could be used as a part of the reading and

writing process. Von Weise (as interviewed by Rubright, 1996) explained,

Storytelling provides marvelous motivation for writing.... Description, characters and components of plot are more refined in the children's oral and written work as a result of listening and responding to storyteller presentations. When children see themselves as storytellers, their writing becomes fresher. (p.101).

Colwell (1980) asserts that storytelling is a vehicle that can be used to introduce children to thoughts and ideas in a way that they can comprehend. In addition, Colwell (1980) wrote, "Stories provide a stimulus to the imagination which cannot be found elsewhere" (p. 2).

Barring varied disabilities, all children can successfully take part in a storytelling experience as a listener or a storyteller (Cooper, 1993; Cullinan, 1993).

The Balance of Story Content and Writing Conventions

Egan (1986) suggests that when writing is taught solely as skills and sub-skills it takes away the more powerful and educationally sound reason for writing, which is to express one's self. The process of writing should be a "structure-seeking more than rule-abiding

activity" (Eisner, 1978, as cited by Egan, p. 90). Egan (1986) expressed the idea that learning to write is a complex process. One does not master all the skills and rules before focusing on individual writing style. The two are developed simultaneously.

Vygotsky (1962) found that a child "...has little motivation to learn writing when we begin teaching it. He feels no need for it and has only a vague idea of its usefulness" (p.99). It is the task of writing these stories down that can be a challenge for early elementary-age students. Vygotsky (1962) further suggests, "...it is the abstract quality of written language that is the main stumbling block, not the underdevelopment of small muscles or any other mechanical obstacles" (p.99). Barton and Booth (1990) also believe that for many young children, writing stories is an overwhelming and rigorous task.

It is maintained by some that it is the idea, or the story, the child is trying to express that holds precedence over the use of good grammar, spelling, and punctuation (Cooper, 1993; Rosen, 1988). Barton and Booth (1990) ask, "Is it possible that in our attempts to teach writing we may destroy the story?" (p. 147). There are

several theories as to how to assist children in the task of successfully transforming oral stories to written stories. Cooper (1993) supports the use of dictation to record student stories. She believes that many early elementary grade children (kindergarten through third grade) have limited understanding of the connection that what they imagine can be written down. This is a result of their limited story writing experiences. She finds that dictation by a child to an adult is a valuable practice to use with young children. Cooper stated,

Subtly and over time, dictation helps to teach the child-author that a written story is merely an oral one put into print. Dictation also helps demystify the orthographic features of print, such as the movement of words from left to right, top to bottom, the space between words, punctuation marks, and so on, because it offers the child an opportunity to scrutinize the way in which words come out of the teacher's pen. (1993, p.49).

As students gain some skills and express a desire to take on the task of writing, Cooper (1993) feels that children under the age of eight should not be burdened with the task of revising their work. She believes that from a developmental point of view, children this young do not grasp the idea that their story can be changed for the better. They also may perceive any change made to their

story as a criticism from the teacher. Furthermore, "Yesterday's work is old news. They are simply not interested in working on it any further." (1993, p.50).

As students mature, storytelling can be used as a vehicle to teach written conventions. Elementary school teacher June Von Weise (Rubright, 1996) uses storytelling as a way of allowing children to express their ideas, but also teaches the basics of writing to her third graders through group lessons that focus on punctuation, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary twice a week. She maintains that the key to developing good writing skills is consistent practice. The children learn to write by writing extensively. She also states that at the beginning of each new writing project, she helps them to establish good writing habits. These writing habits involve the children asking questions of themselves in regards to the purpose of their writing. She asks them to reflect on their word choice, audience, and style. The task of questioning their purpose, audience, words, and style may require some revision on the part of the student.

The balance between teaching the importance of good story content and writing conventions may be a hard one

to negotiate. In the particular issue of spelling, Rosen (1988) states, "...that if a child writes consistently with commitment and energy, this spelling and punctuation weakness is easy to remedy given time, and not much time, either" (p.45). Cooper (1993) insists that the child's ideas are most important, but warns of the risk of the overuse of invented spelling. Invented spelling is a holdover from Whole Language classrooms and is most prevalent in early grades. The hazard is when the teacher's only reply to a child's question of spelling is, "Spell it the way it sounds." or "How do you think it should be spelled?" (p.50). Cooper (1993) points out, as children develop, their understanding of rules becomes greater. They are aware there are rules in spelling and they want to obey those rules. Children who are between the ages of five and eight, and even older, cannot know how to spell every word that they say. She suggests that teachers should try to strike a balance between having students figure some words out on their own and to also provide a set number of words that will be spelled for them.

Storytelling and English Language Learners

When focusing specifically on the education of English Language Learners, providing an opportunity for storytelling is a powerful way to help students of diverse backgrounds. Au (1993) states that sharing stories helps students to, "recognize the significant events and feelings they may want to write about. Simich-Dudgeon (1998) comments that storytelling is also an excellent activity to use with English Language Learners because it "...can take advantage of their previous background experiences and cultural traditions to develop oracy and literacy concepts and skills across the curriculum" (p.5).

The progressions of writing development of English Language Learners proceeds at different rates, just as it does with children who learned English as their primary language. Au (1993) found that English Language Learners apply whatever they know about English language to their writing. Storytelling is one way to provide exposure to the English language. Simich-Dudgeon (1998) found that when working specifically with English Language Learners, lessons "explicitly designed to connect discussion with

reading and writing" (p.6) aid in writing development. For students who are very limited in their English language proficiency, the Language Experience Approach (LEA) is used. In this format, like Cooper's dictation practice, students would tell their story to the teacher. As described by Simich-Dudgeon (1992), the teacher then assists the students in developing the story into a written work that can be read by the whole class.

Hudelson (1994) explains that students who are more proficient in English may participate in a "Writer's Workshop" process. This highly successful process encourages collaborative writing over time. The teacher models the writing process and supports students in their creation, editing and revising of stories they have written based on events in their lives. The teacher works directly with the individual child or a small group of learners throughout this process.

Conclusion

Research in the area of storytelling has shown that it is a means by which many students can be successful. It is a practice with which many are familiar and have had exposure to since they were very young. Listening to

and participating in storytelling experiences provides opportunities for children to explore the elements of stories and to think critically about them. Whether children speak English or another language, they all have stories to tell. Studies have shown that these stories can be expressed in a variety of ways that help in the development of writing skills. From dictation to Language Experience Activities, and from group instruction to Writer's Workshop, children can create and write stories that are meaningful and personal. In the State of California, English Language Learners make up nearly 25% of all of the state's 5.7 million students (California Department of Education, 1998). The incorporation of storytelling could greatly impact the opportunities for children of all language proficiencies to participate and succeed in meaningful writing experiences.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In preparation for the examination of the effect of storytelling on expressive language, story structure, creativity and student enjoyment, an in-depth look into the site and population involved was completed. This chapter will describe the school setting where the study took place and pertinent background information of the students who participated in the study. It will also describe in detail the data collection process and the development of the data collection instrument.

Description of School

Maple Elementary School, located in Fontana, California, was built in 1962. It draws its school population from mostly lower-middle class and working class families in neighborhoods located in Fontana, Rialto, and Bloomington, California. The school has 944 students in grades K through 5. Of this number, 56% are identified by district assessments as English Language Learner. Approximately 80% of the school's population participates in the free or reduced lunch program.

Maple Elementary School is a four-track year round school. This means that at any given time of the school year, three-fourths of the student population is in session with one track off. English Language Learners students were placed with teachers who were able to provide them with language support. Assistance was provided either by clarifying instruction in a student's native language or by using Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) and English Language Development (ELD) strategies. These teachers are all assigned to one track, so a majority of the English Language Learner population is on one track. This track is often referred to as the "bilingual track."

Description of Students

This study took place over ten weeks in the late winter and early spring of the 2000-2001 academic year. Approximately two hours a week, usually on Fridays, was spent participating in the study. The forty-one third grade students who participated in the study were drawn from two third grade classrooms on the same track.

One of the two classes contained ten girls and ten boys, eighteen of which were identified as English

Language Learners. Kodie Sibbett, the class' teacher had four years teaching experience at Maple School. She spoke both Spanish and English and had additional experience teaching English as a second language to adults in the private sector.

The second class was my class of students. It contained twenty-one students, seven of which were girls and fourteen of which were boys. Eleven of the students in this class were identified as English Language Learners. I had five years teaching experience at Maple Elementary School, all of which was with predominately English Language Learners. Although I am monolingual, I have received training in SDAIE and ELD strategies.

Between the two classes, the ages of the children ranged from seven to nine years, with a majority of the children being eight years old. One child had been retained the previous year and was repeating the third grade. Thirty of the students learned Spanish as their primary language and that was the language they spoke at home.

Mrs. Sibbett and I have "team taught" since the beginning of this academic year. Our team teaching situation involved the division of instruction in the

content areas of science and social studies. For thirty minutes a day, two days a week, I taught the social studies curriculum to one class, while she taught the science curriculum to the other. We would then switch classrooms and teach the same lessons to the other class of students for two more days during the week. We also often teamed up as one big group for special lessons and projects.

This team teaching scenario resulted in a positive situation for all students that were to participate in the study. Due to the fact that both groups of students were familiar with me, it provided a level of comfort and community that is often necessary when creating and sharing stories.

The forty-one students in the study were assigned to two groups using a random selection method. One group consisted of ten girls and ten boys, nine of which were from my class, eleven of which were from Mrs. Sibbett's class. The second group consisted of twelve girls and nine boys. Twelve of the students were in my class and nine were from Mrs. Sibbett's. Fourteen students in the first group and fourteen in the second group were English Language Learners.

Description of Data Collection

The study was conducted over an eleven-week period during the 2000-2001 school year. The sessions were conducted on Friday mornings, with the exception of the 9th week. A situation arose where I would not be in the classroom on Friday, so the session took place on a Thursday morning instead. A two-hour and twenty minute instructional block was split up into two one-hour and ten-minute periods. As the study progressed, the sessions were adjusted so the group that was receiving the treatment lasted approximately one hour and twenty minutes while the other group session lasted one hour.

The groups were given identical writing activities, with the exception of the added element of a storytelling experience used with the treatment group. Prior to the commencement of the writing activity, the treatment group would participate in a storytelling experience before the beginning of the writing activity. The control group would begin with the writing activity without participating in any storytelling experience.

The treatment changed over the eleven-week period from teacher-as-storyteller to student-as-storyteller. This was done to see if various levels of

participation in the storytelling experience affected the students' writing.

During the first week, no treatment was given, so a baseline sample of all students' writing could be collected. This baseline sample was used to assess the reliability and validity of the instrument used to evaluate the data. During the second through fifth weeks, the teacher would tell a story to the students in the treatment group before they did the writing activity. During the sixth through eighth weeks, the teacher would tell a story, and then the students would retell the story to a partner. During the ninth, tenth and eleventh weeks, the teacher would again tell a story, and the students would get into small groups of three or four and each tell their version of the story. The process of retelling the story to an audience allowed the students to take the story they heard and make it their own through retelling.

Instrumentation/Data Collection

In order to determine the effects storytelling had on central elements of quality writing four questions were explored in this study: Does storytelling affect

student use of expressive language in writing? Does storytelling affect the development of story structure in writing? Does storytelling affect student level of creativity in writing? Does storytelling affect student level of writing enjoyment?

The first question to be evaluated was "Does storytelling affect student use of expressive language in writing?" Expressive language was defined as instances of adjectives, metaphors, similes, satire, literary hooks or personification used within the story.

During the fifth, eighth, and eleventh weeks of the study, the writing samples were collected and analyzed for data in relation to the expressive language outcome. A pair of readers scored the papers using a five-point rubric designed specifically for each of the first three outcomes (See Appendix A). The scores were then compared. If the scores were the same or were one point within each other, the scores were averaged to give a final score for each student for each student for the outcome. If there was more than one point difference in the scores given for the outcome, the two readers discussed the score together and came to an agreement on the final score.

The second question to be evaluated was "Does storytelling affect student development of story structure in writing?" Story structure was evaluated based on the logical development of a story that included a beginning, middle, end, conflict and resolution.

Again, during the fifth, eighth, and eleventh weeks of the study, the writing samples were collected and analyzed for data in relation to the story structure outcome. A pair of readers scored the papers using a five-point rubric designed specifically for each of the first three outcomes (See Appendix A). The scores were then compared. If the scores were the same or were one point within each other, the scores were averaged to give a final score for each student for each student for the outcome. If there was more than one point difference in the scores given for the outcome, the two readers discussed the score together and came to an agreement on the final score.

The third question to be evaluated was "Does storytelling affect student level of creativity in writing?" Creativity was analyzed by evaluating the emotion elicited from the reader, the occurrence of

unexpected twists in the plot, the uniqueness of storyline and the originality of characters.

Once more, during the fifth, eighth, and eleventh weeks of the study, the writing samples were collected and analyzed for data in relation to the outcome of creativity. A pair of readers scored the papers using a five-point rubric designed specifically for each of the first three outcomes (See Appendix A). The scores were then compared. If the scores were the same or were one point within each other, the scores were averaged to give a final score for each student for each student for the outcome. If there was more than one point difference in the scores given for the outcome, the two readers discussed the score together and came to an agreement on the final score.

The fourth question evaluated was "Does storytelling affect student level of writing enjoyment?" The fourth outcome of student enjoyment was also measured on the fifth, eighth, and eleventh week of the study. This was done by requesting students fill out a three-question survey as to their enjoyment of the writing activity. The responses were anonymous so that students would more likely feel free to express their true level of enjoyment

of the activity as opposed to trying to please the teacher with their response. A rubric was developed that rated the level of influence storytelling had on the selected research focuses of the study (See Appendix B).

When beginning this study, a rubric was designed that was intended to measure the quantity of expressive language, story structure and creativity. In order to examine its ability to measure these outcomes, several writing samples collected outside of the study were used by two different groups of readers to test the validity of the rubric. The first group of readers concluded that the wording had to be very specific in describing what each outcome looked like. Further discussion led to the need to ensure that all participating readers understood and agreed on what each outcome and rubric description meant. The rubric transformed from a vague document to one with explicit description for giving points for each outcome.

The actual pair of readers who were to analyze the data for this study met together and further tested the validity of the rubric by scoring the baseline group of papers collected during the first week of the study. No treatment was applied to either group. This allowed the

readers to score the papers using the revised rubric. Many of the scores they assigned each paper were the same or within one point of each other, leading the team to believe that they would get reasonably valid results from using the revised rubric.

The three-question survey used to assess the fourth outcome of the study, the students' enjoyment level, was a four-point scale on a continuum measuring enjoyment level. The four-point scale forced the student to choose a response that leaned either towards high enjoyment or low enjoyment. This negated the possibility that a student would choose a middle response that would not give the researcher much insight into how much each child enjoyed the activity. Also, several questions were posed to the student. Although worded differently, they basically addressed the student level of enjoyment in the previous writing activity. This provided opportunities for a more valid response to the question.

Once all of the data was collected, the scores from each of the four outcomes were compared over the time of the study to each other. Observations and conclusions were made to see if the treatment group differed from the control group.

CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Upon completion of the data collection, the results for each of the four questions were examined. What will follow in this chapter is a comparison between the results for the Treatment Group (Group A) and the Control Group (Group B) in regards to each question, as well as a summary and interpretation of each of the four outcomes.

What is the Effect of Storytelling
on the Use of Expressive Language
in Student Writing?

The data collected in support of the first outcome shows that the students' use of expressive language showed a steady increase over the ten-week period (See Table 1).

Table 1. Expressive Language

	Outcome 1	
	Expressive Language	
Group	A	B
Week 5	1.5	1.35
Week 8	1.8	1.4
Week 11	2.0	1.52

The experimental group (Group A), which was exposed to the treatment of storytelling prior to the writing experience showed a higher average of instances of expressive language per the first one hundred words of the story than the control group (Group B).

The week 5 data shows an average of score of 1.5, on a point scale from 0-5, for use of expressive language for Group A, compared to 1.35 points for the Group B. Week 8 showed an increase for both groups, but Group A showed a greater increase from 1.5 to 1.8 points compared to Group B's increase from 1.35 to 1.4. The eleventh week showed a continued increase for both groups. Group A finished the study averaging 2.0, which translates to an average of four to six instances of expressive language per first 100 words and Group B averaging 1.52 points which would be 1-3 instances of expressive language (See Appendix C).

Group A showed a steady increase in the amount of expressive language used in the stories. These results support the hypothesis that the continuous exposure over a ten-week period to storytelling provided them with stories rich with expressive language. This exposure supplied them with examples of how stories could be made

better with the use of adjectives, adverbs, metaphors, and similes. Upon reflection of the writing samples, the most frequent use of expressive language was the use of adjectives, especially those describing quantity and the basic outward features of the character or setting.

The control group also showed slight increases in expressive language used throughout the study. Although they did not experience the storytelling component, the conclusion can be drawn that the weekly opportunity to write creatively allowed them to explore such language usage independently. Both groups experienced increases in the use of expressive language, however it seems that the storytelling experience served as an inspiration for students to explore and begin utilizing expressive language more frequently in their story writing.

What is the Effect of Storytelling on the Development of Story Structure in Student Writing?

The data collected for the second outcome, which analyzed the students' use of the story structure elements, showed students in Group A developed a stronger sense of structure throughout the study and that they

were able to apply the structure to their own writing
(See Table 2).

Table 2. Story Structure

	Outcome 2	
	Story Structure	
Group	A	B
Week 5	1.85	1.6
Week 8	2.2	1.71
Week 11	2.11	1.95

As was stated earlier, the elements of story structure examined were the inclusion of a beginning, middle, conflict, resolution of the conflict, and an ending to the student's writing. Over the course of the study, students in Group A went from a score of 1.85, which indicates stories had an average of two of the five elements of narrative writing, to a score of 2.2 in week 8 and 2.11 in week 11, which indicate the inclusion of three of the five elements of story structure. The three elements most frequently noted were the basic beginning, middle and end. At the start of the study, students often left out an ending that would bring an identifiable

conclusion to the story. By the last stages of the study, students who were exposed to storytelling experiences were more compelled to create a complete story that included an ending to their tale (See Appendix C).

Students in Group B showed a steady increase in their average scores throughout the study. The scores ranged from 1.6 in week 5 to 1.71 in week 8 and 1.95 in week 11. Although there was an increase, students in Group B averaged 2 out of the 5 elements of story structure. The stories written by Group B participants usually included a beginning and middle to their story, but no discernable ending (See Appendix A).

What is the Effect of Storytelling on the Creativity of Student Writing?

The analysis of creativity is often a subjective analysis. In order for the readers to assign a rubric score for the outcome of creativity, they had to answer four yes or no questions in regards to the story (See Appendix B). Once the reader has answered the questions with yes or no, the number of questions answered with yes was tallied to achieve the score. Each yes equaled one point for the creativity outcome.

In analyzing the data, Group A showed a peak in creativity in the eighth week and a slight decline by the eleventh week. The data collected for Group A showed a score of 1.45 in the fifth week, a score of 2.05 in the eighth week and a 1.75 score for the eleventh week. Group B started off with a higher score than Group A in the fifth week with a score of 1.6. It increased negligibly to 1.61 in the eighth week and finished out slightly higher than Group A in the eleventh week with a 1.79 (See Table 3).

Table 3. Creativity

Outcome	Outcome 3 Creativity	
Group	A	B
Week 5	1.45	1.6
Week 8	2.05	1.61
Week 11	1.75	1.79

The results illustrate that the experimental group showed a peak in creativity after the eighth week. During the sixth, seventh, and eighth weeks, the participants in Group A participated in student storytelling. After the teacher shared a story, the

students paired up and retold the story they just heard to their partner. This activity gave the students an opportunity to make the story their own and add their own elaborations and details. The students then took the storytelling they had just experienced first hand and used it to create their own stories. This short preparation before the act of writing provided the students with enough motivation to write their own story.

By the eleventh week, students in the experimental group had dropped in their level of creativity. During the last three weeks of the study, the students in Group A taking the storytelling experience to a larger audience. Students got into groups of three or four and retold the story they had just heard to the members of their group. By the time each student had told the story to the group, interest in creating their own written stories seemed to drop. The amount of time that had passed between the child's storytelling experience and the actual process of writing it down may be attributed to a decrease in creative writing.

In the end, the control group ended the study with a higher score in creativity. The results from this outcome support the hypothesis that teacher directed

storytelling may deter students from using their own creativity. In analysis of the writing samples of both groups, the students who had the storytelling experience seemed to model their own stories after some aspect of the story they heard or traditional stories with which they were familiar. The students either borrowed the characters, storyline, or setting of the story they had heard, instead of creating their own, or they borrowed these aspects from traditional, familiar stories. An example of this is the many stories based on the "Three Little Pigs". Even though this was never a story told during the study, students in the Control group who sat down to create their stories often had titles such as "The Three Little Dogs and the Bad Wolf" (See Appendix C). Students in the Experimental Group seemed somewhat restricted by the storytelling experience in their creativity. Students in the Control Group did not have any stories in which to model their own creative writing, so perhaps they were more open in their creation of storylines, characters, and settings.

What is the Effect of Storytelling
on the Student Enjoyment of
a Writing Experience?

The final outcome analyzed in the study was the enjoyment of the student participant in the writing experience. The students filled out a three-question survey after the writing experience (See Appendix C). The responses to each question were tallied and averaged to get a final score for the outcome of student enjoyment. A score of 1 indicated a high level of enjoyment and score of 4 indicated a low level of enjoyment (See Table 4).

Table 4. Participant Enjoyment

Outcome	Outcome 4	
	Participant Enjoyment	
Group	A	B
Week 5	1.28	1.09
Week 8	1.67	1.8
Week 11	1.6	1.91

Note: A score of 1 indicated a high level of enjoyment; a score of 4 indicated a low level of enjoyment.

For both groups, the students started out with a relatively high level of enjoyment with the Group A averaging a score of 1.28 and Group B with a score of 1.09.

The level of enjoyment decreased slightly over the 10-week study. By the eighth week, the enjoyment level had dropped to 1.67 for Group A and 1.8 for Group B and finished out with 1.6 for Group A and 1.91 for Group B. However, the Experimental Group maintained a higher level of enjoyment than the Control Group.

The results indicate that the use of storytelling, both teacher-as-storyteller and student-as-storyteller, increased the students' enjoyment level of the writing activity. The use of storytelling provided students with variety in the weekly writing experiences. Students in the Control group may have hit an enjoyment plateau because the writing sessions were exactly the same week after week. There was no variation in the writing

This research project began as a search for ways to teach writing to third graders, some of which were in the process of learning English as their second language. Over a three-month period in the spring of the 2000-2001 school year, forty-one third graders participated in this

eleven-week writing activity. The students were randomly divided into two groups. One of the groups participated in a storytelling activity prior to their writing session, while the other groups did not have any storytelling experiences before they began writing.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS

AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The students were evaluated on four outcomes that pertain to story writing. The outcomes that were measured were use of expressive language, story structure, creativity, and participant enjoyment. They were scored using a specially designed and tested rubric that assigned points for each outcome on a scale of 0-4.

The results of the study supported the hypothesis that the group that participated in the storytelling experiences displayed improvement in use of expressive language and development of story structure, two of the three areas of writing outcomes that were measured in this study. In addition, students who were exposed to storytelling enjoyed the writing activity to a higher degree than the control group. The results from the analysis of the outcome of creativity showed that, as the study progressed, storytelling appeared to have a slightly negative effect on the students' creativity in their writing.

Several hypotheses are supported by this study. First, storytelling does seem to increase the use of expressive language. Secondly, storytelling has a positive effect on story structure development. Storytelling seemed to have a small negative effect on the level of creativity, but storytelling experiences did increase the level enjoyment of the writing activity for the students.

Some of the limitations of this study include the fact that it was conducted in a rigid time frame within a school day. On occasion, a student's writing opportunity was cut short due to the fact that time had run out. This variable may have resulted in stories that were underdeveloped or not always a true measure of the student's story writing ability.

An additional situation that provided some limitations to the study was the approach of the end of the academic school year. The duration of the study had to be limited as well. An interesting next step might be have been to conduct a writing lesson a month or so after the conclusion of the study. The results may have provided further insight into the effect of storytelling on the four outcomes of students' writing.

It is the opinion of this researcher that storytelling is a natural way to expose students to the beauty and rhythm that expressive language can give to a story. It is a means to introduce students to language they may not necessarily find in everyday conversation. Students who are learning English as their second language seem to benefit soundly from this exposure to language and the opportunity to experiment with it in their own writing.

Storytelling also provides students with the opportunity to better understand the structure of stories. They experience the beginning of the story, which sets the foundation of who is in the story and where the story will take place. They feel the build up of the rising action conveyed through the detailed description of the story's events until they reach the height of the story. The students sense the ending is drawing near as the storyteller brings the events to a close with a well-developed conclusion. Although books read to and with children can provide this experience, the intimacy involved in oral storytelling can aid in cementing this understanding for a greater number of children.

This study showed that the act of storytelling does not noticeably increase the creativity of the students' writing. However, an even balance of writing opportunities, both with and without storytelling, can help to develop a more creative and competent writer. Students enjoy the use of storytelling as part of their writing program. This continued enjoyment could lead to more eager writers who will take opportunities to explore the author within. Extending storytelling with activities such as creative dramatics, movement and art may also help to further student creativity in writing.

All students, especially students who are learning English as a second language, can benefit from the use of storytelling in a classroom setting. The use of storytelling can be effective, as discovered in this study, by using the methods of teacher-as-storyteller and student-as-storyteller. Storytelling is a cost effective, simple tool that can be implemented in any school curriculum to help students become better writers.

The results of this study provide some encouraging findings and useful suggestions for those in the education field that work with language learners and writing instruction in the primary grades.

This study has explored the connection of storytelling to creative story writing. The findings are mostly in support of what recent research in the field suggests is beneficial to student writers. Future research in this area could continue to explore the effects that the role of student-as-storyteller has on the creative writing produced by students in the primary grades.

APPENDIX A:

SCORING RUBRIC: OUTCOMES ONE THROUGH THREE

	4	3	2	1	0
Outcome 1: Expressive Language	7+ different adjectives, adverbs, metaphors similes, satire, hooks, personification in the first 100 words	5-6 different adjectives, adverbs, metaphors similes, satire, hooks, personification in the first 100 words	3-6 different adjectives, adverbs, metaphors, similes, satire, hooks, personification in the first 100 words	3 or less different adjectives, adverbs, metaphors similes, satire, hooks, personification in the first 100 words	No evidence of different adjectives, adverbs, metaphors similes, satire, hooks, personification in the first 100 words

	4	3	2	1	0
Outcome 2: Story Structure	Contains all 5 elements (beginning, middle, end, conflict and resolution)	Contains 4 elements (beginning, middle, end, conflict and resolution)	Contains 3 elements (beginning, middle, end, conflict and resolution)	Contains 2 elements (beginning, middle, end, conflict and resolution)	Contains 1 or 0 elements (beginning, middle, end, conflict and resolution)

Outcome 3: Creativity Part I (Circle one in each box)	Story elicits emotion from the reader and has the reader in mind: YES NO	Story has an unusual or unexpected twist: YES NO	Has a unique story line (not a retelling) YES NO	Story shows a creative/imaginative way of thinking about plot or character: YES NO	
Part II	4	3	2	1	0
	Has 4 YES responses	Has 3 YES responses	Has 2 YES responses	Has 1 YES response	Has no YES responses

APPENDIX B:
STUDENT ENJOYMENT SURVEY

Circle the phrase that most describes your answer to each question:

1. Did you enjoy this writing activity?

All of the time Most of the time Some of the time

Never

1

2

3

4

2. How interesting did you find this writing activity?

Very

1

Mostly

2

A little

3

Not at all

4

3. How often would you like to do this activity?

Everyday

1

3 times a week

2

Once a week

3

Never

4

APPENDIX C:
SAMPLES OF STUDENT WRITING

One day a littel bunny was eating a caret with a rat. Nexs day the rat was eating chees with the bunny. Dey ware best frens but one day the bonny dirint bring the care and the rat got mad and he went home. But the nexs day dey ware fren agen, and the rat dinint brin the chees the rat was looking at the bunny the bunny says, "dont wori o am not angry with you." The nexs day the bunny and the rat ware havim a pick nick and dey ware best frens for ever.

One day I was playing with my for was being mean by taking the ball away from me. I was going to ask can we have our ball back but didn't and he just ran off with our ball and I went to his house and ask for the ball but he ran out the back door with the ball. Now I was mad so I went home and went right to sleep and did not get up. So the next day I ask my friends did you get the ball back they all said no we didn't. I Am going to tell that fox off. So I did what I said I was going to do and I did I got the ball back and he never did it again and was friends with me too.

Once long ago live three dogs. One day their mother sent them off to make their own house! The first little dog made her house out of straw. Second little dog made her house out of sticks. The third little dog made house out of bricks. One day a wolf came to the first dog house let me in no side the dog the wolf was so mad that he blow the house down but the wolf don't see an. The wolf went to the second dog house the wolf was so mad that he blow down the house but the wolf don't no see an. They ran to the

Once upon a time there was a boy who wanted a coat made of Adamals. He wanted a coat made of a SUMATRAN TIGER. Then he saw a girl then he told her could you go hunt in the woods and kill a SUMATRAN tiger for I could make a tiger coat. She said if you give me food I will kill a tiger for you he said ok it took her one week to kill a tiger. One day she killed a tiger and took it to the man then the man gave her food and he made his coat.

When I was sick one day
I was playing at recess. Then my head
started hurting. So I went to
the nurse. Then the nurse checked
I felt like I thrown up. So I
did on the floor. The girl called my
mom my mom got the bone. then
the girl told my mom what happen.
So my mom said she was going to
pick me up. So she did we went
home to get some medicine that we
had at home. my mom had to go
back to work. So she went to my
baby siter. Then she left me there.

When I went to the vet
I saw animims. I went to the
vet Becuaes my dog was sick.
He got a shot. They put something
yellow in his mouth becaues that
he want cry. Then we went to
Pet's Mart there was a lot
of Dogs. We took him the to
get his traming less us then. We
But a color For him Becaues he
was Good. Then we took him a
bath.

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