

Enhancing The Kindergarten Language Experience Using Storytelling Props

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Background

Deer Park has approximately nine hundred students ranging from preschool students to sixth grade elementary students. I am a general education kindergarten teacher at Deer Park Elementary School, located in Centreville, VA in Fairfax County. The kindergarten program includes a double-session half-day program with a three and half hour morning session supporting two classes of 28 to 29 students and two afternoon classes of 26 to 27 students. The overall kindergarten population includes 25 to 30 second language learners. Second language learners do not receive formal ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) support until first grade in Fairfax County, therefore all ESOL students are fully included in the kindergarten program. The kindergarten program also contains a non-categorical special education class which supports four mainstreamed students into the regular education classroom for a portion of their day. Finally, our kindergarten program includes two students with autism in a variety of ways during the school year.

Motivating Factors

During the course of each day in my kindergarten classroom, students make independent choices to participate in learning centers during a one hour and fifteen minute block of time. These centers include a drama center, a listening center, a computer center, a math center, a science/discovery center, an art center, a construction zone (blocks, Legos, etc.), a writing center, and a literacy center. Each day the children move by choice through activities that are planned and prepared to meet specific learning objectives or provided to induce discovery learning. Additionally, during Choice Time students are assigned two to three specific lessons called "Specials" which they must complete during Choice Time. These tasks vary according to content area throughout the week and are often designed to integrate literacy, writing tasks, science or social studies tasks, and mathematical tasks into the "Specials".

As I observed my students in learning centers during Choice Time, I noted that students rarely chose to participate in the literacy center which was comprised of a wide range of picture books, easy readers, big books, and a few short chapter books for early natural readers. Occasionally a teacher-made lesson or flannel story was made available that related to a theme we were studying. It was

apparent, that although most children made choices to visit their favorite center becoming... builders, actors, creators, scientists, and writers... one group was definitely missing... readers/storytellers. Activity in this center was limited to the "Specials" which were assigned to them throughout the week. Very little real choice participation was taking place. I was disheartened that the children showed little motivation in the area of literacy. John T. Guthrie describes the "reading behaviors" I noted in my literacy center as "compliance." He maintains,

When children read merely to complete an assignment, with no sense of involvement or curiosity, they are being compliant.... Compliant students are not likely to become lifelong readers. Compliance is a more external motivation than involvement or curiosity. Similarly, other motivations for reading that are primarily teacher-driven, program-driven, or assignment-driven...control behavior temporarily but not permanently.... They will not sustain long-term literacy development (433).

Given these insights, I turned my attention to other centers which were attracting and motivating my students to learn.

I noticed that students were very comfortable when approaching the math and science centers, engaging in manipulative play and learning. I began to wonder if a hands-on literacy center would entice the children's interest. As the NAEYC states in its position statement, "A growing body of research has emerged recently affirming that children learn most effectively through a concrete, play oriented approach to early childhood education"(Brendekamp, 1). This play-centered approach is a belief that I uphold in my teaching practices, and thus I sought to apply what I was already doing in the realm of science and math to the literacy program in my class. After hearing the strides made by another teacher in the area of enhancing her writing center through a teacher-research approach, I began to focus on my literacy center, my diverse student population which allowed me to generate my own research question.

The Question

How will the use of story telling props enhance language experiences and increase the prior knowledge of culturally diverse and educationally diversified early childhood students?

Prior Knowledge

As I reflected upon the lack of interest in my literacy center, I began to pay special attention to the individuals in my classroom. It became clear to me that as vastly different were the interests of my students, so were the individuals themselves. Multicultural, multi-ability, multi-interested and multi-interesting was this collection of little people. Where did these children come from? What experiences were driving them to make the choices they made each day? How

could I tap into their experiences, their knowledge, to draw them into language and literacy play?

As our society has become more culturally diverse and as the social setting for children has changed due to dual career parents, I questioned the underlying assumption that my children have been exposed to the "old favorites" in children's literature. For example, it appeared to me that fewer children may have heard the fairy tales, or heard songs and rhymes such as Old Mac Donald or Over In the Meadow. I wondered if ESOL students had heard the "traditional" tales such as The Three Little Pigs, or Golidlocks and The Three Bears. Indeed, Lindy Twiss noted in her research, *Innovative Literacy Practices for ESL Learners*, "that many students have not read or heard fairy tales, folk tales or classic fiction common to Western cultures.... She found it valuable to incorporate it as a substantial portion of the children's reading material" (413). I also wondered if the ESOL students have comparable traditional tales in their own culture. Therefore in order to gather knowledge about the students' cultures I followed Chamot's and O'Malley's suggestions in The Calla Handbook for communication with parents, discussion with colleagues, and "genuine interest" in the students' experiences in order assess their prior knowledge (84).

In The Read Aloud Handbook, Jim Trelease describes background (prior) knowledge as "a tool we use to make sense of what we see, hear, and read." He further indicates that "shallow or faulty" prior knowledge impacts the understanding of reading new material (11). The value of prior knowledge in language and literacy development is clearly a critical element in guiding children of all ages to valuable literacy experiences. If "shallow or faulty" background knowledge affects reading in older students in this way, would it not also affect "reading behaviors" in the early childhood literacy experiences? As a result of this premise, I gathered data about my students' prior knowledge with respect to story telling, use of props, literacy play, and reading behaviors.

The concept of ascertaining the background and cultural knowledge of each child was a puzzle to me. Many kindergarten students have a hard time answering a question about themselves-- especially if the questions are not "of the moment." That is, unless they have used puppets in the last 24 hours or so, they may tell you they never have. Or if a child had once picked up a puppet, for instance a kid's meal finger puppet toy, they may extol themselves as a puppeteer extraordinaire. Another concern was that the amount of students participating made interviewing out of the question (a sample size greater than 50). A survey to parents about literacy and storytelling behaviors was sent to all the students in my class and to a sampling of students from other kindergarten sessions and the non-categorical classes.

Prior Knowledge Survey Outcomes

I received forty completed survey responses. Of the forty received, nine surveys were identified as ESOL respondents, and no noncategorical students participated. A portion of the survey was devoted to reading and retelling behaviors at home. Survey results indicated that all students are read to routinely. Many of the respondents (62%) do not engage in puppet play with any regularity. Fewer still (10%), use puppets to retell stories. However, ninety percent of parents reported that their children occasionally to frequently retell television programs. Less than half of the children retell stories using any other prop and fewer still, retell stories through writing. See Appendix A.

Many parents (65%) indicated that they believed their child was familiar enough with the stories of Goldilocks and The Three Bears and The Three Little Pigs to retell them with reasonable accuracy. Fewer respondents reported their child's familiarity with The Little Red Hen, The Gingerbread Man, and Cinderella. Fewest respondents indicated familiarity with tales such as Rapunzel, The Princess and the Pea, and Hansel and Gretel. The ESOL respondents followed the same trend of responses in this area, see Appendix B.

Observations on Survey Outcomes

I found it surprising that thirty-nine respondents indicated that their children had heard the familiar fairy tales including all nine ESOL respondents. I was additionally perplexed to note that parents generally reported that their children can accurately retell stories at home and do engage in character-play during their play experiences. I believe it is significant that many of the characters indicated are also television characters. Are characters in play recalled from reading or frequent viewing of favorite television programs?

I found it significant that Goldilocks and the Three Bears was indicated as a widely known story. As a result of this finding, I chose this story to conduct my case studies in retelling. Additionally, I was pleased to receive comments regarding ESOL students' traditional tales. See appendix C. Equipped with these general responses on the surveys and my own questions and observations, I prepared to narrow my research to individual students by conducting case study interviews/retellings.

Methods

Case Studies Procedures:

I selected eight students from my regular education kindergarten sessions to take part in a video-recorded case study of retelling behaviors of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. I selected the students to participate based upon a desire to include

a cross-section of academic achievement, racial and cultural diversity, and English proficiency. The focus group consisted of:

- Two ESOL students demonstrating average to above average academic achievement and demonstrating a lower level of English expression than nonESoL students
- One ESOL student demonstrating average academic achievement and strong oral English expression
- One ESOL student demonstrating high academic achievement and strong oral English expression
- One general education student demonstrating strong academic achievement
- Two general education students struggling with academic achievement
- One general education student demonstrating average academic achievement

Additionally, three non-categorical special education students participated in the case study with their teacher, Mrs. Sharon Denisar. The profile of these students was:

- One special education student identified as Other Health Impairment which includes severe deficits in auditory processing, as well as visual motor integration, receptive and expressive language weaknesses.
- One special education student identified with Specific Learning Disability including speech and language impairment.
- One special education student identified with Specific Learning Disability including mild auditory processing and receptive and expressive language weaknesses.

I followed Lesley Mandel Morrow's recommendations in Literacy Development in the Early Years, as a guide to structure the retelling interviews. She suggested that "pre- and postdiscussion of the story help improve the story retelling (183)." Therefore when beginning the case study, I chose not to discuss or read the story with the children. I conducted a brief pre-reading interview of the students to establish their prior knowledge of the story. During this interview students were asked "Have you ever heard the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears?" Depending on the response, children were asked to tell me the story, or tell me about the story. If the child did not recognize the story, I asked them about what story they liked to read at home.

The next day, I read the big book version of Goldilocks and the Three Bears retold by Brenda Parkes during our Shared Reading literacy lessons. During Choice Time, students were again interviewed individually. Prompting students to "retell the story as if you were telling it to a friend who has never heard it before" (Morrow,184), I encouraged each child to retell the story we had shared earlier that morning. If a child needed minor prompting, I supplied story book language

such as "Once upon a time...", "and then..." or I asked simple questions such as "What happened next?" or "Then what happened?" Students who were unable to retell the story were asked more specific questions such as "Where did the story happen? Who was in the story? What did Goldilocks do?" etc. (Morrow, 184). Students were also asked what their favorite part of the story was, to promote specific event recall and to maintain a comfort and confidence level with those students who found the retelling difficult or disjointed. Finally, I indicated to the students that we'd be telling the story with props the next day, and asked if they'd be willing to come back one more time to talk with me.

The final day of the case studies entailed a flannel board retelling of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. As part of the story telling process during Shared Reading, I modeled and provided direct instruction on how to inventory and sequence the story flannel pieces on the board below the flannel setting of the bears' cottage. However, after the story telling began, I maintained the story without interruption. I modeled the telling of the story, using dialog and animated voices in the story. Following this Shared Reading experience, I invited the participating students to visit with me individually and to make use of the story telling props. The flannel pieces were presented in a pile on the easel shelf in no specific order. The flannel setting was displayed for their use. Each child was prompted to use the flannel board to tell the story. Minor prompting was given if the child was hesitant. These prompts included comments such as "What should you do first?" or "It's okay if your version is different, use your own words." As in previous interviews, students were given more specific prompts as needed.

Students in the noncategorical kindergarten classroom participated in similar interviews with their teacher, with minor modifications such as specific verbal prompting to assist their participation.

Case Studies Outcomes

As the case studies unfolded, I found several common outcomes and observations within the context of the story telling. During the story telling sessions without the flannel board props (Day 2 of interviews), Students who demonstrated a lower English expression in daily communication, and one student who struggles with academic achievement, displayed significant difficulty in sequencing the story. Additionally, these stories lacked detail, and often contained significant mistakes or omissions. Furthermore, I noted that four of the students lacked any significant prior knowledge of the story, having indicated that they never heard the tale before, or they confused it with another tale such as Little Red Riding Hood or The Three Little Pigs. These students required many specific prompts to tell the tale, expressed difficulty in retelling the story sequence in a logical manner, and struggled to recall details of the story they had heard that morning.

Conversely, students who displayed moderate to significant prior knowledge in the pre-reading interview, were able to tell at least a generalized retelling of the story without props. I found it of tremendous interest that one of the general education students who struggles with many reading readiness skills, demonstrated very strong prior knowledge, and retold the story in each of the interviews with enthusiasm, accuracy, and detail. I further noted that both of the high achieving students over generalized the story, leaving out significant portions, or failing to elaborate on events or details of the story when telling the story without props. These same students exuded confidence in themselves and needed minimal prompting to begin or continue with the story.

Most students were able to recall at least one specific event in the story, such as the chair breaking when Goldilocks sits in it, or her frightened flight at the bears return home. However, few students animated the characters with voices, intonation or inflection to enhance their storytelling. Further still, few of the students made use of story book language, such as, "Once upon a time...", "Somebody's been sitting in my chair", or "It was just right." See appendix D.

When students were instructed on flannel board retelling, and presented with an opportunity to use them, vital changes took place in the retellings for all students. I noted that the students who demonstrated lower English proficiency required fewer prompts to relate the story. The story itself was retold with a range of very simple one or two word phrases to incomplete, yet more complex phrases. These students utilized the props to move through the story when words failed them, and appeared to use the flannel setting as a guide for sequence. Additionally, students who range from low to average academic achievement, improved on sequencing, providing detail, and avoiding significant omissions. Many of these students required a few prompts to get started in the story, but none required step by step prompting.

Most notably, the high achieving students who over generalized in the retelling in the previous interview, used the props to tell a complete, and detailed story, and were more likely to extemporize dialog and story language as they told the story with the flannel board characters. Every student exhibited improvements in the story telling when using props, including increased use of story book language, and use of intonation, inflection, or animated voices for the characters.

Additionally I noted that most students began their storytelling by setting up the flannel pieces provided, in the same manner that I had modeled and instructed in the earlier classroom story telling. Several commented as they set up the pieces on the board, that it was the first step in telling the story.

Observations with regard to the special education students included significant language improvement for the student with expressive and receptive deficits when using the storytelling props. She showed a marked increase in descriptive language, specifically using vocabulary never used before. Moreover, she spoke

in complete sentences and used many descriptive words. Organization of her story was a relative weakness, yet she appeared confident in her story and enjoyed the telling. Mrs. Denisar notes that "In order to compensate for H__'s memory weaknesses, she would have to hear the story many times prior to the retelling task," therefore comprehension in this isolated case study was not achieved. In spite of the lack of comprehension in this interview, Mrs. Denisar asserts, "the props helped generate thought, creativity, vocabulary, and sentence completion which helped strengthen a very vulnerable expressive language delay."

The two remaining special education students demonstrated an improvement in several areas of comprehension as well as language use. Both students exhibited an improvement in generation of thought, sequence, and detail about the story which was not typical of their classroom performance. Mrs. Denisar notes, "S-- has an extremely weak expressive language delay. The props helped evoke vocabulary and thought to his retelling session. This was a most impressive 'side effect' of the use of the props."

The aforementioned case studies provided me with a variety of significant observations with regard to the benefits of language development, importance of setting, and the role of direct instruction in storytelling. To further explore these elements of storytelling instruction, I continued my observations and expanded my research to include drama in story telling in large and small groups in my general education classes.

Drama Instruction and Observations

Returning to the data from the parent survey, I chose The Three Billy Goats Gruff because few parents indicated that their children were reasonably able to retell the story if asked. I hoped this story would provide me with a tale that most children would be on equal footing for in terms of prior knowledge. Furthermore, the tale is one that contains a pattern of events and dialog, which lends itself to an early childhood dramatization. I first shared the story with the children and encouraged them to participate in the big book reading, and repetitious elements. For example, students read "Trip, trap, trip, trap" and "Who's that trip, trapping, over MY bridge?" After two days of shared reading experiences, we moved toward a whole group retelling.

By way of setting and props, I made use of a wooden stepping "bridge" and flannel character masks printed with the three goats and the troll . In order to instruct the group, I played the part of a narrator/screen director, providing the characters with verbal instruction as we retold the story. Four students modeled the use of the masks and bridge, and the remaining students divided themselves to be the "water" under the bridge, and participated by chanting "Trip, trap, trip, trap" as each "goat" crossed over.

In the morning class' rendition, we ran through the retelling once as a whole group, with the bridge set up in the classroom. Following the whole group drama, the students were assigned the task to come during Choice Time and retell the story in a small group of their peers. Dramas were video taped and an adult "screen-director" remained close by for most of the small groups. As the morning class completed the small group dramas, it became apparent that the students require a high level of "screen-direction", and needed an additional piece of setting to guide the story... that was a meadow. Therefore we added a flowered table cloth to the floor close by, and found that its addition guided the "goats" to a resolution of their part in the story by giving the students a specific destination when acting out the goats arrival across the bridge. As I further observed the morning class, it became clear that a few more modifications would have been beneficial. I noted that when supervision and direction of the children was lightened, the use of the masks and bridge deteriorated into chaotic play, as students began to climb and jump off and around the bridge. Additionally, students experienced frequent distractions when performing the drama in the midst of all the other activities in the classroom.

With these observations in mind, I made a few adjustments in the afternoon session's direct instruction and the setting of the drama. We moved the bridge and blanket into the resource area outside my classroom. In this area, with the exception of classes moving occasionally throughout the halls, it was quieter, more spacious, and more conducive to dramatic retelling. I chose to engage the children in the whole group retelling in this setting as well. Additionally, rather than run through the whole group retelling once and then have the small groups convene, we ran through the story twice. During the first dramatization, I facilitated heavily and provided a great deal of verbal direction. On the second whole group dramatization, I provided less support and the children prompted one another on the the storytelling.

The resulting small group dramas still required an adult facilitator/screen director, however, the students' independence and retelling skills appeared to be directly affected by the change of environment and additional instruction. Small groups were successful and it was noted that more extemporaneous dialog and action took place.

Other observations of specific interest included the ESOL students' interaction in this retelling event. In this retelling, I was able to take note of two ESOL students who had almost no English expression. Each student reacted entirely different to the story telling opportunity. S__ joined right into the story telling, wearing the masks, moving through the motions of being the "biggest billy goat gruff", including a dramatic dive off the side of the bridge. Although he chose not to speak at all, he demonstrated story knowledge and participated in a significant manner. Another ESOL student of very limited English expression, wanted nothing to do with the drama. She reacted strongly to the masks, and resisted

even sitting and watching her peers, for fear she would have to wear one of the masks.

It was noted that students both ESOL and NonESOL were highly likely to use dramatic character voices in these retellings. Many students added flourish and humor to the retelling, creating an entertaining and much sought after opportunity for literacy learning.

Digital Picture Observations:

Throughout the school year, students were presented with a wide variety of story telling props. The choices I made in props changed based on my observations. I utilized a digital camera to document unstructured moments of learning and serve as visual reminders for guiding my teaching of storytelling.

Puppets:

My first inclination was to simply provide students with puppets and a puppet theater. I envisioned students creating elaborate original stories or retellings with their peers. I noted that although initially students showed interest in the puppets, their interest waned within a day or two, and puppet play, was just that... play. The puppet theater became a forum for chaotic play with handheld creatures that were growling and screeching. As my observations and formal research unfolded, I realized that two things were missing: direct instruction in the use of story props, and a detailed setting.

Story apron and finger puppet theater:

Armed with my observations about free play use of the puppet theater, I modeled and provided the students with the Velcro story apron and story pieces. Additionally, I modeled the use of the finger puppet theater. Students showed temporary interest in these items as well. The instruction helped to improve the quality of retelling play, however, students interest waned more quickly than I imagined. I considered whether a detailed setting, may be a significant link to interest and success in story telling.

Flannel board stories:

The widest and most sustained interest in the props I presented was with the flannel board fairy tale set. It contains two detailed setting backgrounds, and flannel character and setting accessory pieces. I noted that students gravitated in and out of the center to make use of various stories. Storytelling "teams" worked together to retell the stories, relying at times on the pictures of the big books we read in class. Although interest ebbed and flowed, I noted that these props were the most likely to draw the students back, even after remaining unused for a day or two at a time.

Magnet Stories and Stories with Moving Pieces:

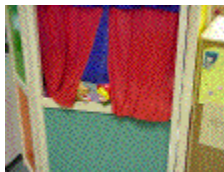
My colleagues and I found that the interest and participation was highest with storytelling devices in which there is a complete setting and movable pieces such as in magnetic story boards, overhead projector/shadow stories, or a teacher-made farm with movable character and setting. Students often choose to work with these items with peers, retelling familiar stories or songs such as Caps For Sale by Esphr Slubodkina, Mrs. Wishy-Washy by Joy Cowly, or that favorite *Old Mac Donald Had a Farm*.

Patterned Stories and Sequence Stories:

Students also enjoyed flannel stories and student-made puppets for stories that were sequential in nature. Eric Carle's The Very Hungry Caterpillar, has a logical progression to it that all my students could follow using a teacher-made flannel story, or the student-made story cards. Another example of these sequential stories was Jan Brett's The Mitten. Students created a large paper mitten and stick puppets. The simple "one-more-animal-into-the-mitten" story line, lent itself to students who could order the animals by size for their "turn" into the mitten. These storytelling activities were very successful for work in small groups or pairs.

A significant benefit to student-made props was the carry-over of storytelling into the home environment. In a year-end survey, one parent writes "J__ enjoys using the puppets made at school to tell both mom and dad the story he's learned. He's very detailed...he can retell stories with props with more enthusiasm and confidence that he knows the stories from beginning to end."

Whole Group Story Telling:



Throughout the year, I designed several lessons that centered on whole group retellings... indeed, some stories needed all of us to be successful. Included in these lessons were story boards, dramatizations, overhead projector/shadow stories, and story hats. These whole group lessons sparked new interest in existing storytelling props, and activities, and served as a model for individual or small group story experiences at other times. With each new discovery as the research unfolded, I made determined attempts to enhance the setting of the props provided and to carefully model the use and explicitly teach the use of the props as well as the elements of the story to be retold.

Implications for Educators

Props and Their "Place" in Literacy:

Returning to the question, *"How will the use of story telling props enhance the language experiences and increase the prior knowledge of culturally diverse and educationally diversified early childhood students?"* several very clear directions flow from my research findings. Undoubtedly, story telling props encourage active involvement in the story and the literacy lesson presented, and this involvement results in increased comprehension and sense of story (Zarra, 7). Props promote guided play, which promotes meaningful language experiences, which in turn, is added to a child's prior knowledge. In her study of the impact of manipulatives on story retellings for disabled preschoolers, June Zarra states "the overall purpose of any language and literacy event is for the construction of meaning" (13). Further, she asserts "When the child actively participates in the story process, it allows him or her to make it part of themselves.. to internalize the experience into his or her schema" (13).

I was particularly pleased how this internalization of experience led to new insights into the story "play" abilities of non-English speaking students. The use of props provided a "window" into the story comprehension of nonexpressive ESOL students. These students used the props to nonverbally act out the events of the story. From these behaviors, teachers can assess nonExpressive or reluctant ESOL speakers to "show" the story events or answer simple questions using the props as visual aids.

Through my own observations, I found students were highly motivated to participate in storytelling events which included moving parts, familiar repetition text or dialog, and play-like experiences. Of particular interest is the role that the setting plays in the successful retelling story and the sustained interest of these young storytellers.

Setting and Story Props:

The importance of setting in storytelling experiences emerged as a major element in successful story comprehension. In my case studies, each student relied upon the setting to guide the sequence of events, and the student's confidence in his or her ability to tell the story to completion increased. Students who were unable to sequence the story events in an oral retelling, utilized the story setting to guide them through the events of the story, as noted in the case study observations.

In the dramatizations, marked improvement in the success of the small group dramas was noted when the setting was enhanced to provide a guide for students of "where to go next" (both in physical terms, and in terms of where the story leads next.)

Finally, storytelling props which provide a setting "guide" for the story sustained the interest of the students for longer periods of time, or were more likely to "draw" students back to them after initial presentation of the props. This was evident by the sustained interest in the flannel boards, magnet boards, movable farm, and the overhead projector stories.

Teachers seeking to improve overall story comprehension and sequencing of events, should look for story telling props that provide a detailed, supportive setting as a basis for guiding students through the events of the story. Additionally, educators should seek the use of stories in which the setting is constant or has few significant setting changes when working with young story tellers and the story structure should be predictable to support a young learner's retelling ability (Zarra, 15). See Appendix E for a list of stories used in this research project.

Direct Instruction and Story Telling Technique:

Although I began this project with the hypothesis that simply providing story props, or manipulatives would lead to significant literacy interest by students, it has become abundantly clear that the value of direct instruction far exceeds any expected results that pure "discovery" play with storytelling props might yield. As I reviewed and reflected on good literacy practices, and quite simply good teaching practices, it is evident that the direct instruction teachers provide in reading techniques can also be applied to the concepts of story retelling. For instance, in reading instruction, "teachers who are most successful in motivating their students introduce, model, and provide opportunities for students to use many reading strategies" (Turner, 670). Certainly, that same introduction, modeling, and opportunities in storytelling skills are a crucial element in motivating the students in storytelling opportunities. As noted in the case studies, and observations of digital pictures, students demonstrated a higher interest level in those props which I provided direct and explicit instruction in the use of the props and the story elements.

Teachers seeking to sustain motivation in the area of storytelling need to introduce, and explicitly teach the use of the props and the story elements. Teachers should monitor the students success, remediating as needed, and modifying the props or their use as dictated by the achievement of students and their abilities to work through the story as instructed.

Story Props and Language Development/Expression:



A final and integral area of impact of story telling using props is the enhanced vocabulary, intonation, elaboration, and use of voice that was recorded in this research. In every case study observation, students of varied educational, native language, and academic background demonstrated an improved use of language when provided with story telling props. Without question, "hearing stories helps children develop language skills" as they "are exposed to many ways language is put together...[and] are introduced to new vocabulary through literature" (Cliatt, 293). Providing students with meaningful manipulative story props with a supporting setting designed into the experience encourages students to take the great risk of becoming a part of the storytelling experience. In placing themselves into the role of the storyteller, the students exhibited new understanding, fresh language opportunities, and became an improved tale teller, regardless of their academic circumstances.

One parent in my class comments, "A__ often recalls verbatim, 'Once upon a time...!' or she will remember the inflection of the teacher's voice and attempt to imitate it.... Although A__ is an emergent reader, her oral language/retellings are more sophisticated than they were in September." With this example of progress as a goal for all students, it is undeniable that story telling props, do indeed, enhance the language experiences and increase the prior knowledge of culturally diverse and educationally diversified early childhood students in the areas of motivation to engage literacy, comprehension of story elements and sequence, and elaborative language development.

Next Steps:

Given the substantial impact that props have made in my kindergarten program, I plan to explore ways to extend these experiences into the home learning environments of my students... a new question emerges, How will the opportunity to use story telling props at home affect the literacy behaviors of kindergartners at home and in the classroom?

Appendix A

	Listens to books at home	Reads/pretends to read	Retells with accuracy	Plays with puppets	Uses puppets to retell	Uses computer storybooks
% answered						
Frequently	75%	28%	15%	5%	2%	13%
Sometimes	22%	41%	38%	20%	8%	26%
Occasionally	2%	26%	35%	32%	22%	18%
Seldom	0%	3%	12%	25%	38%	24%
Never	0%	3%	0%	12%	25%	13%
Not Sure	0%	0%	0%	5%	5%	5%

Appendix B

Has your child heard familiar fairytales?	
Yes (NonESOL)	75%
Yes (ESOL)	100%
No (NonESOL)	2%
No (ESOL)	0%

Retell story?	Three Bears	Little Red Hen	Rumpelstiltskin	Cinderella	Three Pigs
Yes (NonESOL)	58%	43%	25%	42%	55%
Yes (ESOL)	44%	67%	22%	22%	78%
No (NonESOL)	42%	57%	75%	58%	45%
No (ESOL)	56%	33%	78%	78%	22%
#VALUE!	58%				

Retell story?	Rapunzel	Princess & Pea	Frog Prince	Hansel & Gretel	Gingerbread Man	Jack & Beanstalk
Yes (NonESOL)	18%	5%	8%	38%	75%	38%
Yes (ESOL)	11%	0%	11%	44%	78%	33%
No (NonESOL)	82%	95%	92%	62%	25%	62%
No (ESOL)	89%	100%	89%	56%	22%	67%

Appendix C

Comments and English Equivalents to Familiar Fairytales:

- Crow and the Cheese, The Lion and the Mouse
- The Three Bears, The Three Little Pigs, Hansel and Gretel, Little Red Riding Hood, The Ugly Duckling
- The Panchatandra Collection of stories. We have them in Marathi--a language in Bombay. Many of these stories are well known fables. We also tell religious myths-and retell in english
- Stories from Panchatandra
- Treasury of Indian Tales
- 2 English equivalents
- Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, The Three Little Pigs, The Princess and the Pea, The Gingerbread Man

Case Study Observations

Appendix D-1

First Interview				
Background Knowledge				
	ESOL student	ESOL student	ESOL student	ESOL student
	Avg. Academics	Avg. Academics	High Academics	Avg. Academics
	Low Proficiency	Avg. Proficiency	High Proficiency	High Proficiency
Demonstration of:				
Prior Knowledge?	None	Yes	Yes	Limited
Story Book Language?	n/a	No	No	No
Sequences Events?	n/a	Disjointed, omissions	Yes, past tense	No
Confidence?	n/a	Uncertain, but willing to try	Yes, somewhat	No
Story Detail?	n/a	Moderate	Moderate, generalized	Incomplete
Animated Voices?	n/a	Yes-all same	Some at end.	No
	General student	General student	General student	General student
	Avg. Academics	Low Academics	Low Academics	High Academics
Demonstration of:				
Prior Knowledge?	No-Red Riding Hd & Bears	Yes	Limited-Girl and Bears	Yes
Story Book Language?	No	Yes	No	No
Sequences Events?	No	Yes	No	Generalized, compact
Confidence?	No	Yes	No	Yes

Story Detail?	No	Yes	No	Major events, not detailed
Animated Voices?	No	Yes	No	No

Appendix D-2

Second Interview				
Retelling With No Props				
	ESOL student	ESOL student	ESOL student	ESOL student
	Avg. Academics	Avg. Academics	High Academics	Avg. Academics
	Low Proficiency	Avg. Proficiency	High Proficiency	High Proficiency
Demonstration of:				
Prior Knowledge?	Confused with 3 Pigs	Some-Scared Goldilocks	General recall	No favorite part
Story Book Language?	No	No	Somebody's been in my...	No
Sequences Events?	No- disjointed	Very disjointed	Prompted start-Omissions	Mjr. events w/omissions
Confidence?	No-many prompts	Some- needed prompts	Yes- minor prompts	Needed prompts to con't
Story Detail?	No-recalled pictures	Some detail- out of order	Generalized, quick	Moderate
Animated Voices?	No	High pitched all bears	Some high pitched bears	No
	General student	General student	General student	General student
	Avg. Academics	Low Academics	Low Academics	High Academics
Demonstration of:				
Prior Knowledge?	Some- Laid in bed	very detailed comments	breaking chair	"Heard it alot."

Story Book Language?	No	"Just right.. Ate it all up!"	No	"Too hot" "Just right"
Sequences Events?	Mjr. events w/omissions	very sequenced	random recalling of events	Skipped bear's events.
Confidence?	No, shy needed prompt	needed prompt to start	many prompts needed	Yes
Story Detail?	3rd person, generalized	minor miscues	general and disjointed	very general
Animated Voices?	No	yes, different for bears	No	No

Appendix D-3

Third Interview				
Retelling With Props				
	ESOL student	ESOL student	ESOL student	ESOL student
	Avg. Academics	Avg. Academics	High Academics	Avg. Academics
	Low Proficiency	Avg. Proficiency	High Proficiency	High Proficiency
Demonstration of:				
Prior Knowledge?	Set up setting	Started, then s/c w/set up	Set up-sequenced	set up- help with characters
Story Book Language?	some w/1 prompt	my version.. teeny weeny	Once upon a time	Once upon, Someone's been
Sequences Events?	moved props sequenced	followed setting	organized- no omissions	followed setting order
Confidence?	quiet verbal, used props	very - few prompts	confident - 1 begin. prompt	confident - 1 begin. prompt
Story Detail?	Slight oral, some visual	moderate to high	Yes-good	some
Animated Voices?	1-2 words, no voice	+ complex phrases, voices	Voices w/bears	No

	General student	General student	General student	General student
	Avg. Academics	Low Academics	Low Academics	High Academics
Demonstration of:				
Prior Knowledge?	Set up w/o prompt	set up first	showed fav. part	Fun. Has one at home
Story Book Language?	naughty girl, extemporized	"One morning..."	"Teeny weeny... Someone been..."	"Right at that time"
Sequences Events?	Skipped bears, s/c w/props	+ sequenced, setting organz.	start hard, followed setting	Quick & complete.
Confidence?	few prompts needed	Yes- 1 prompt	many prompts	Very!
Story Detail?	good detail	very! Bears events included	moderate after start	+ elaboration
Animated Voices?	voices for bears	yes, different for bears	slight voice change	voices for bears

Appendix E

Recommended Stories

For story retelling, use familiar fairy tales such as:

- *The Three Little Pigs, Goldilocks and The Three Bears, The Three Billy Goats Gruff, The Little Red Hen, The Fox and The Hen, and The Gingerbread Man* retold by Brenda Parkes.
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar, and Today is Monday* by Eric Carle
- *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin, Jr.
- Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes
- *The Little Mouse, The Red Ripe Strawberry, and The Big Hungry Bear* by Don and Audrey Wood.
- *The Wind Blew* by Pat Hutchins
- *The Mitten* by Jan Brett
- *Hey Little Ant* by Philip and Hannah Hoose
- *Mrs. Wishy-washy* by Joy Cowly
- *Over In the Meadow, Five Little Ducks,* and other traditional counting rhymes

- *Who's In the Shed?* by Brenda Parkes

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D. Seidel

Kindergarten Teacher
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