TEACHING PROSODY THROUGH READERS THEATRE

by

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

One of the major challenges faced by elementary-level teachers of English as a

second language (ESL) is that of helping students to achieve reading fluency. Much of

our effort as educators often is focused on teaching students to decode text, but reading

fluency includes more than just quick and accurate word recognition. In order to be

fluent readers, students must be able to read with proper expression, thus demonstrating

their understanding of the text (National Reading Panel, 2000). Teaching English

language learners (students for whom English has not been the first language) in a public

elementary school, I have experienced first-hand the challenges of helping my students

learn to read fluently. For English language learners (ELLs) mastering the skills needed to read their new language aloud with appropriate expression can be particularly daunting.

One strategy that has been shown to increase oral reading fluency is repeated reading, defined by Samuels (1979, 1997) as "rereading a short, meaningful passage several times until a satisfactory level of fluency is reached" (p. 337). One activity which utilizes the strategy of repeated reading is Readers Theatre. Young and Vardell (1993) define Readers Theatre as "a presentation of text that is expressively and dramatically read aloud by two or more readers" (p. 398).   This chapter introduces some of the concepts of expressive oral reading, as well as some of the issues involved in teaching these concepts to ELLs through the use of Readers Theatre.

Readers Theatre and Expressive Oral Reading

The National Reading Panel (2000) offers the following definition of fluency: "Fluent readers can read text with speed, accuracy and proper expression" (p. 3-1). Dowhower (1991) notes that most research done on fluency has focused on quantifying the reader's speed and accuracy, which are relatively easy to assess, while the element of prosody (or expression) has usually been ignored. She attributes this to the fact that it is a more arduous and time-consuming task to measure mastery of the prosodic features, or elements of expression, than it is to count the number of words a student reads per minute.

The three prosodic features typically associated with expressive reading are intonation (pitch), stress (emphasis) and timing (phrasing) (Dowhower, 1991). Linguists often refer to these elements as the suprasegmental aspects of speech because they have

to do with the whole sentence, not just the individual sounds, or segments, of speech (Avery & Erlich, 1992).

For struggling readers who are native speakers of English, learning to transfer the prosody they use naturally in everyday speech to the realm of oral reading can prove challenging enough. But English language learners face a multi-faceted challenge: they must master the prosodic features of English in their speech and, if they are to become fluent oral readers, they must learn to utilize these same skills in their oral reading. In order to do so, though, they need to comprehend the meaning of the text they are reading. As Peregoy and Boyle (2001) note, for students learning to read in a second language, reading comprehension can be a slower and more arduous process. In addition to having lower proficiency in the new language, ELLs may lack background knowledge relevant to the text. For these students, any strategy aimed at improving fluency must include activities which build pertinent background knowledge and thus increase comprehension.

Over the past three decades, repeated reading has been widely used as a strategy for the development of oral reading fluency. Numerous studies (Tyler & Chard, 2000; Dowhower, 1997; Samuels, 1979; Worthy & Prater, 2002) have shown that practicing the same passage several times increases students' accuracy and rate. Kuhn (2004) found that repeated reading also significantly improved students' use of prosodic features.

Despite the benefits of repeated reading, many students seem to groan at the idea of having to read the same material a number of times. "We've read that already!" has been a common refrain in my own classroom. But, as Rasinski (2003) observes, when students view their repeated reading as rehearsal for a performance, their level of

motivation is likely to increase. Readers Theatre provides the excitement of a stage play, without the added work of building sets and costumes. The focus is on reading, not memorization, and with no props and little movement, students must use their own expressive reading to communicate the story to their audience.

Role of the Researcher

For the past four years, I have taught ESL at a public elementary school in a large suburban school district. In the district as a whole, 21% of students are English language learners. The school where I teach is typical of elementary schools in the district, also having 21% of students designated as ELLs. My students include both first- and second-grade English language learners. This study was conducted with a pull-out group of six second-graders, whose language proficiency levels ranged from intermediate to advanced. Three of the students have Hmong as their native language, and three are native speakers of Spanish. They came to my classroom for a 35-minute period each morning, during which we focused on language development in the areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Background of the Researcher

Expressive oral reading has been a part of my own life for as long as I can remember. My mother, a former high school English teacher, loved to read aloud to my siblings and me. Having a flair for the dramatic, she brought each story to life by the way she read it. When I began to read independently, it was natural for me to follow her example. Though I did not realize at the time how fortunate I was to have such a wonderful reading

mentor, I now know that the time my mother spent reading to me was a gift that has served me well throughout my life.

My love of oral reading led to a love of the theatre, and eventually to a bachelor's degree in Theatre Arts. Among the many types of performances in which I have participated over the years, one of my favorite genres has been Readers Theatre. Indeed, my own long-time love of Readers Theatre is the primary bias that I bring to this study. Because I believe that it is such an enjoyable experience for both readers and audience, and because of how my participation in it has helped to develop my own reading skills, I am undoubtedly biased toward believing that it can be beneficial to my students as well. It should come as no surprise that when, as a new teacher, I first read of the connection between Readers Theatre and oral reading fluency, I was eager to try this type of reading with my students.

My first attempt at using Readers Theatre in my ESL classroom was somewhat unfocused. I did not yet have a clear idea of what, specifically, I was trying to accomplish. But one thing was obvious: my students loved Readers Theatre! They worked hard during the practice sessions (for once, not complaining about reading the same material several times) and afterwards, they continued to talk about the performance and to ask when they could do it again.

As I considered the more fluent, expressive reading I had observed during the performance, I began to wish that I had conducted a pretest so that I could measure the growth my students had achieved. I knew how to measure rate and accuracy; these two aspects of fluency are tested three times each year in our district. But the element of

prosody, despite its strong connection to comprehension, was never included in the fluency assessment. Intuitively, I felt that prosody was important, but I knew I needed to learn more about its role in reading fluency, and the most effective ways to teach it. This curiosity led to the development of the guiding questions that have motivated this study.

Guiding Questions

As a result of these experiences, I decided to focus on the following questions: What are the effects of a comprehension-focused Readers Theatre program on second-grade English language learners' use of prosody when reading aloud in English? To what extent does any improvement carry over to new, unrehearsed material?

Summary

This research project has focused on teaching students to improve their use of prosodic features when reading aloud. Prosody, or expression, is an essential element of fluent oral reading. It is a skill that can be particularly difficult for English language learners to master, not only because they are still learning how to use the prosodic features of English in their own speech, but also because of the challenges they face in reading comprehension. Repeated reading is a strategy that has proven effective for improving oral reading fluency, and Readers Theatre, combined with comprehension activities, can be a highly motivating and effective form of repeated reading. Because the element of prosody (particularly as it relates to ELLs) has received so little attention in fluency research, I believe it is an area that merits further study.

Chapter Overviews

In Chapter One I have introduced the key concepts related to my research, and have discussed the purpose of my work and its relevance to English language learners. I have briefly explained the context of this study and have introduced the role, background and biases of the researcher.

In Chapter Two I will review literature pertaining to this study. Questions addressed will include: How is oral reading fluency defined? What is prosody and what is its role in fluency? What part can repeated reading play in the process of increasing fluency? Finally, what are the effects of using a Readers Theatre program, combined with comprehension work, to help students become more expressive oral readers?

Chapter Three presents the methodology of this research project, and in Chapter Four, the results of the study are described. Chapter Five includes reflections on the results and limitations of the research, as well as implications for further research and recommendations for using Readers Theatre in ELL classrooms.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to learn how the rehearsal and performance of Readers Theatre scripts, combined with comprehension instruction, affects English language learners' use of prosody in oral reading. In this chapter, I will review literature in four related areas. The first section explores literature on oral reading fluency and its connection to comprehension and silent reading. In the second section, I will examine prosody and why it is important to fluency, as well as identifying its key elements. Literature on Repeated Reading is reviewed in the third section, and the fourth section examines Readers Theatre and its use as a tool for improving fluency. These four areas are being explored in order to lay the groundwork needed to answer the following research questions: What are the effects of a comprehension-focused Readers Theatre program on second-grade English language learners' use of prosody in oral reading? To what extent does any improvement transfer to new, unrehearsed material?

Oral Reading Fluency

Oral reading, to a greater or lesser extent, has long been a part of classroom instruction in the United States. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it dominated school routines. Students often read their lessons orally over and over, until they were memorized. Teachers also copied sections of text onto the chalkboard for students to read aloud chorally (Pulliam, 1994). Around the beginning of the twentieth

century, though, oral reading began to fall out of favor. Leading education researchers of the time, such as Edmund Huey and Horace Mann, believed that too much focus was being placed on elocution, and too little on understanding the meaning of what was being read (Rasinski, 2003). The focus began to shift, and silent reading became the primary means of teaching comprehension, with fluent oral reading being deemphasized. Silent reading was also seen as a more efficient form of reading, and as more and more books became available to schools, it was seen as a way to cover a greater amount of material (Rasinski, 2003).

The 1970s saw a resurgence of interest in the subject of oral reading fluency. Research in fluency gained momentum, and as Hoffman (in forward to Rasinski, 2003) notes, researchers over the past thirty years have been learning more and more about the role that oral reading fluency plays in reading acquisition. Today, although definitions of it may vary, oral reading fluency is regarded as an essential aspect of reading (NRP, 2000).

Experts in the field of reading research have not always agreed on a single definition for oral reading fluency. The definitions adopted by some earlier researchers (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Samuels, 1979) focused primarily on the accuracy of word recognition and the rate of reading. But as Kuhn (2005) notes, there is now a consensus that, in addition to rate and accuracy, fluent reading includes a third element. A number of researchers describe this third component in terms of expressiveness or appropriate expression (Martinez, Roser & Strecker, 1991; NRP, 2000). Others prefer the term 'prosody' (Dowhower 1991; Kuhn, 2005; Miller & Schwanenflugel, 2006). The National

Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), in its 1995 report on fluency, does not even include rate or accuracy in its definition; it defines fluency as "the ease or 'naturalness' of reading" (p.1). Rate and accuracy are described as two other aspects of reading, separate from fluency.

While most authors treat comprehension as an element that is separate from fluency, Harris and Hodges (1995) define a fluent reader as one who "reads smoothly, without hesitation and with comprehension" (p. 85). Pikulski and Chard (2005) propose a more comprehensive definition which synthesizes those of Harris and Hodges (1995) and of the National Reading Panel (2000): "Reading fluency refers to efficient, effective word-recognition skills that permit a reader to construct the meaning of text. Fluency is manifested in accurate, rapid, expressive oral reading, and is applied during, and makes possible, silent reading comprehension" (p. 510).

The association noted in the above definition between fluency and comprehension is well-documented. LaBerge and Samuels noted the connection in their 1974 paper on the automaticity theory. This theory holds that fluent readers decode text automatically, leaving most of their attention for comprehension. In contrast, for the dysfluent reader decoding is not automatic, and requires so much of his or her focus that little attention is left for comprehension. As a student gains the ability to decode accurately, and then moves beyond this accuracy stage to the automatic stage, he or she is able to recognize the words on the page without much attention. At this stage, the rate of reading increases, along with the level of comprehension.

More than thirty years after LaBerge and Samuels' paper was published, their automaticity theory is still cited by numerous authors as a reason that fluency is necessary in order for comprehension to take place (Kinniburgh & Shaw, 2007; Kuhn, 2005; Miller & Schwanenflugel, 2006; Therrien & Hughes, 2008). In addition to its connection to comprehension, fluent oral reading has been connected to silent reading. Because the inner speech that takes place in the reader's mind during silent reading is thought to approximate the sounds of oral reading, fluent oral reading can serve as a model for silent reading, helping to develop the ease, rate and comprehension that good silent readers experience (Rasinski, 2003; Weber, 2006; Worthy & Broaddus, 2002).

As the National Reading Panel (2000) notes, our understanding of what is entailed in reading fluency has grown and evolved over the past thirty years. In addition to the automaticity theory, current discussions of reading fluency typically include the element of grouping or chunking words into appropriate phrases (NRP, 2000). Kuhn (2005) and Miller and Schwanenflugel (2006) argue that the automaticity theory alone does not account for the role of prosody in fluent reading. In order to construct meaning out of what they are reading, readers must be able to group words together into meaningful units. Miller and Schwanenflugel (2006) suggest that prosody may provide the "linguistic bracketing" (p. 840) needed to achieve such grouping. The reader's use of prosody may be an indicator of his or her ability to accomplish this type of text segmentation (Dowhower, 1987).

Prosody

<u>Definition</u>

Prosody is sometimes defined in terms of how it affects reading. Thus, prosodic reading may be defined as expressive reading (Miller & Schwannenflugel, 2006) or reading in meaningful phrases (Dowhower, 1987). More often, though, prosody has been defined in terms of the elements, or prosodic features, which would be indicators of the reader's ability to segment or chunk text in a meaningful way. The exact number of, and names for, these prosodic features varies across the literature. Several authors list three or four features, such as pitch, loudness, tempo and rhythm (Crystal, 1997; Harris & Hodges, 1995). Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (1996) also include tempo and rhythm in their definition, but prefer the term 'intonation' rather than 'pitch', and 'volume' rather than 'loudness'. Dowhower (1991) and Schreiber (1991) both describe three main prosodic features: stress, intonation and timing or phrasing. For purposes of this study, I will define prosodic reading as reading expressively, in meaningful phrases, and as having three key elements: intonation, stress and timing.

<u>Intonation</u>

Intonation is sometimes described as the melody of language because it refers to the pattern of pitch changes that occurs in speaking or oral reading (Avery & Erlich, 1992; Crystal, 1997). The pattern of intonation, or intonation contour, that occurs as a sentence is spoken or read aloud, helps the listener to determine its meaning. For example, if a sentence is spoken with rising-falling intonation, it typically signals that the speaker is making a statement. The same sentence, spoken with a rising intonation, usually

corresponds to a type of yes/no question. *Wh* questions, on the other hand, typically have a falling intonation pattern in English (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996; Avery & Erlich, 1992). These are only generalizations, though; in reality, intonation contours vary considerably, depending on the communicative intention of the speaker (what he or she really means by the sentence) (Thompson, 1995; Celce-Murcia et al., 1996).

<u>Stress</u>

Stress is the intensity with which a word or syllable is spoken. When a syllable is more strongly stressed, it typically is louder, longer in duration, and may also involve a change of pitch (Dowhower, 1991; Weber, 2006). A word may receive increased stress because the speaker wants to place special emphasis on it, because it is new information, or because it contrasts with what has previously been said. Words within a sentence may be strongly stressed, lightly stressed or unstressed (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996).

<u>Timing</u>

Timing, or phrasing, relates largely to pauses. Prosodic readers use pauses appropriately within and between sentences. Put simply, they know when to pause and when not to pause. They tend to group words into longer, meaningful units or phrases. Poor readers, on the other hand, often exhibit numerous pausal intrusions (inappropriate pauses within words or phrases), resulting in halting, word-by-word reading. Some research has also indicated that better readers show more variation in the length of their pauses than do poor readers (Dowhower, 1987, 1991; Miller & Schwannenflugel, 2006).

<u>Importance of Prosody</u>

In order to make meaning out of text, readers must be able to segment it into meaningful chunks or phrases. Students who read fluently are demonstrating this ability through prosody. Their timing shows that they understand phrasal boundaries. Their proper use of stress and intonation indicates that they comprehend how those phrases relate to one another to create the meaning of the sentence, and of the entire text (Miller & Schwannenflugel, 2006; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003; Schreiber, 1991). As Kuhn (2004) notes, the correct use of prosody is a reliable indicator of a student's comprehension, because without comprehension, it would not be possible to use prosodic elements appropriately. Miller and Schwannenflugel (2006) claim that intonation, in particular, is directly related to comprehension. Their study found that children whose reading exhibited the same intonation patterns as skilled adult readers had greater comprehension, while children with inappropriate intonation contours scored lower on comprehension tests.

These findings are not surprising, given that an intonation contour expresses the meaning of a sentence, as do stress and timing. If the reader does not comprehend the meaning, how can she or he express it? It seems logical to conclude that comprehension is necessary in order for expressive reading to occur. Dowhower (1991), however, points out that the relationship between prosody and comprehension may not be so clear-cut. Her own 1987 research, much like the aforementioned studies, showed that as students progressed in their prosodic reading, their comprehension improved as well. In her 1991 article, though, she states that, despite widespread agreement that prosody and

comprehension are linked, the exact nature of that link is not fully understood. She compares this dilemma to a familiar question: Which comes first, the chicken or the egg? Does increased comprehension come first, resulting in more prosodic reading, or do young readers need to exercise prosodic skills first, breaking a sentence into meaningful phrases in order to comprehend it? Despite this unanswered question, Dowhower emphasizes the strong connection between prosody and comprehension. She states, "Educators need to attend to and focus more on the melodies and rhythms of language to help students gain fluency." (1991, p. 170).

Prosody and English Language Learners

Several reading researchers have discussed the special challenges faced by ELLs who are learning to read. Peregoy and Boyle (2001) claim that the mental processes used in reading are essentially the same whether one is learning to read in a first or a second language. They add, however, that the task is more difficult for nonnative speakers for two reasons. First, they may lack background knowledge pertaining to the text, and second, a lack of proficiency in the new language makes reading harder.

Having a lower English proficiency level may make it particularly challenging for children to become prosodic readers in English. Research has shown that young children are very sensitive to the prosodic melodies of their native language, and rely heavily on prosodic features to determine the phrasing, and thus the meaning, of spoken sentences (Schreiber, 1991). Even for children learning to read in their first language, transferring this knowledge of prosody from the spoken word to the written word can be quite challenging. One reason may be that children's knowledge of prosody in spoken

language is still developing, even at the age of nine or ten. Another factor is that the prosodic cues they rely upon to process spoken language are largely lacking in written text (Miller & Schwannenflugel, 2006). Of course, some prosodic cues are present in written language; the end of a sentence is indicated by a period, question mark or exclamation point. Other phrasal boundaries, though, are not marked by punctuation. For example, as Schreiber (1991) points out, although the break between the subject noun phrase and the predicate verb phrase is an important phrasal boundary, the rules of good writing prohibit the use of a comma between the subject and predicate in English. Another example of missing prosodic cues is given by Weber (2006) who describes the difficulties many emergent readers have with function words (i.e. *of, for,* or *do*). While prosodic reading requires that these function words be given weaker stress than content words (i.e. nouns or main verbs) there are no indications on the printed page to communicate this to students.

If transferring knowledge of prosody from speech to reading is problematic for children who speak English as their first language, it stands to reason that it must be even more challenging for those who are learning English as a second language. Gibson (2008) stresses the need for ESL teachers to call attention to issues of prosody, and suggests that oral reading is an effective way for ELLs to practice these skills. Indeed, numerous researchers have advocated for oral reading, specifically repeated oral reading, as an effective strategy to teach this important element of reading fluency (Dowhower, 1991; Kuhn, 2005; National Reading Panel, 2000; Rasinski, 2003).

Repeated Reading

<u>Background</u>

In 1979, S. Jay Samuels published his classic article, "The method of repeated readings". The article has been widely quoted in reading literature ever since, and was reprinted in 1997 with a forward by Sarah Dowhower. In her forward, Dowhower asserts that in the years since the article's original publication, repeated reading has become one of the most widely used, influential and enduring practices in our educational system. In his own notes, added to the 1997 reprint, Samuels claims that repeated reading is the most universally used technique in reading instruction.

Samuels' development of the repeated reading method evolved out of his earlier work on the automaticity theory, which suggested that, in order to be fluent, a reader must decode text automatically, leaving attention free for comprehension (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). The method of repeated readings was developed to provide students with the practice needed to achieve this automaticity. In his 1979 article, Samuels compares reading with music and sports, both of which require a degree of automaticity. Until the musician can decode the notes automatically, his or her mind will not be free to play the piece with expression. To achieve this, Samuels notes, a beginning musician is given a small amount of material to practice repeatedly, until it is mastered. Too often in reading instruction, he says, we push struggling readers through a book too quickly, denying them a chance to master even a single page.

Samuels (1979, 1997) defined the method as "rereading a short, meaningful passage several times until a satisfactory level of fluency is reached" (p. 377). In this study,

Samuels worked with children who were struggling readers. The students were given short selections of 50-200 words. An initial reading was done before practice, measuring the number of words read per minute, and the number of word recognition errors. Students continued practicing and retesting until a rate of 85 words per minute was reached, and then moved on to the next selection.

Samuels notes that rereadings can be done with or without audio support. Some students in his study practiced their passages while listening to a fluent reader reading the selection on tape. After several rereadings, the tape was no longer needed, and the students read the passage on their own. In more recent literature, this is referred to as assisted repeated reading, with assistance being provided to the reader either by an audio tape or by a live model, typically a teacher or other adult who reads the passage along with the student. When there is no tape or live model, the procedure is referred to as unassisted repeated reading (Dowhower, 1989).

Benefits of Repeated Reading

Repeated reading has been shown to be effective at increasing fluency not only in Samuels' original 1979 study, but in numerous studies since then. The National Reading Panel (2000), after conducting a meta-analysis of 77 experimental studies on repeated reading, declared unequivocally that "repeated oral reading with feedback and guidance leads to meaningful improvements in reading expertise for students" (p. 3-3). Specifically, they list word recognition, fluency and comprehension as aspects that show significant improvement with repeated reading practice. The studies they reviewed

showed that repeated reading worked with students from first grade through college, and with both good and poor readers.

Two notable studies conducted since the National Reading Panel released its report have also verified the effectiveness of Repeated Reading. Kuhn (2005), working with struggling second-grade readers, compared repeated reading with wide reading, in which a greater number of stories were read, but only one time each. She found that both interventions produced significant gains (as compared to a control group) in accuracy, rate and prosody. A 2008 study by Therrien and Hughes compared the effectiveness of repeated reading with that of a questioning technique on the comprehension of fourth-through sixth-graders with learning disabilities. Students in the group utilizing the questioning technique were shown a set of generic story-structure questions (i.e. "Who is the main character?" and "Where and when did the story take place?") before reading, and were reminded that they would need to answer these questions after reading the story. Students in the repeated reading group were told to read as well and as quickly as they could. They were told that they would need to answer questions about the story afterward, but were not shown the specific questions. They then read the story up to four times, until they reached a preset goal for the number of words read correctly in one minute. During the rereadings, students in this group received corrective feedback on word errors. The results of the study demonstrated that students in the repeated reading group made significantly better gains in both fluency and comprehension than students in the group using the questioning technique. The authors concluded that students in the repeated reading group benefited from both the extra practice and the corrective feedback

which was provided. The group which used the questioning technique may have been at a disadvantage in terms of comprehension because they only read each story once, and thus had less exposure to the facts of the story. In addition, without the repetition and corrective feedback, this group was struggling more with decoding, and had less attention to devote to comprehension.

Assisted and Unassisted Repeated Reading

As previously noted, repeated reading can be undertaken with or without assistance. The assisted approach calls for students to practice their readings along with a fluent reader. This can be accomplished by having the student listen to an audiotape of a fluent reader reading the selected passage, or by having him or her read along with a live model. The fluent modeling may be provided by a teacher, paraprofessional, parent or volunteer. Older students and more fluent classmates may also serve as effective models (Worthy & Broaddus, 2002). In contrast, the unassisted approach calls for students to practice their readings independently, without a tape or live model.

A 1987 study by Sarah Dowhower compared the assisted and unassisted approaches to repeated reading. Dowhower worked with second-graders who were struggling to make the transition from word-by-word reading to fluent reading. Students in the assisted group listened first to each passage on tape, and then practiced reading with the tape until they could read along simultaneously with the taped reader. Children in the unassisted group did not use a tape or live model; they practiced the passages independently, but did receive help identifying individual words when they asked for it. Dowhower found that both approaches resulted in significant gains in reading rate,

accuracy and comprehension. While both groups experienced significant gains in prosody, growth on two specific prosodic measures was greater for those who used the assisted approach. The assisted students performed better on timing (they had fewer inappropriate pauses and better phrasing) and used more appropriate intonation at the ends of sentences than did those in the unassisted group.

Although Dowhower's study appears to be one of the few comparing assisted with unassisted repeated reading, a number of researchers advocate the types of modeling that are typically used in the assisted approach (NRP, 2000). Several authors note that teacher modeling is especially important in helping students to achieve prosodic reading (Kuhn, 2005; Moran, 2006; Schreiber, 1991). Weber (2006) found that providing a model of fluent oral reading may be particularly beneficial in teaching English stress patterns. Given the fact that ESL students have typically not had as much experience listening to the stress, intonation and timing of English as their native-English-speaking counterparts, it stands to reason that such modeling may be especially helpful for them.

Transfer

To what extent do the improvements gained by modeling and repeated reading transfer to material that has not been practiced? The National Reading Panel (2000) argues that many experimental studies have not adequately measured this transfer effect. Still, they conclude that there is enough evidence to suggest a strong possibility that transfer does occur, and they call for further study of the question. Therrien and Hughes (2008) did not find a transfer effect for repeated reading in their study, but speculated that the lack of transfer may have been due to the small number of rereading sessions they

employed. Samuels, however, in his 1979 article, reported that his experiment did show transfer of positive effects; the number of rereadings needed for students to reach the desired reading speed decreased with each successive passage used. Other researchers have also stated that the increased fluency gained from repeated reading is carried over to new, unpracticed texts (Dowhower, 1989; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003; Tyler & Chard, 2000).

Motivation

Samuels (1979) claimed that the improvement students saw in their reading fluency scores made repeated reading exciting and motivating for them. In contrast, other authors argue that reading the same passage over and over is not interesting or motivating for many students. They suggest that one way to increase interest and motivation while incorporating the strategy of repeated reading is to engage students in rehearsing and performing Readers Theatre (Rasinski, 2003; Tyler & Chard, 2000; Worthy & Prater, 2002).

Readers Theatre

Background

Readers Theatre is a rehearsed presentation of text that is read aloud expressively and dramatically for an audience (Flynn, 2004; Kinniburgh & Shaw, 2007; Young & Vardell, 1993). Readers Theatre performances differ from conventional plays in several ways. In contrast with traditional stage plays, Readers Theatre performances do not require sets, costumes and props, although these elements can be included if desired (Coger & White, 1982). Another key difference is that the performers read their parts from scripts rather

than memorizing them. In addition to published Readers Theatre scripts, poems, stories and nonfiction texts may all be adapted for use in Readers Theatre.

Although its roots may be traced back to the theatrical traditions of ancient Greece, Readers Theatre as we know it is a relatively recent phenomenon. The term Readers Theatre was probably used for the first time in 1945, and the genre became more popular throughout the 1950s and 60s (Coger & White, 1982). In addition to being performed by professional theatre companies and college theatre departments, Readers Theatre has now become a widely used teaching strategy in K-12 classrooms. It has been used by teachers for a variety of purposes, including to develop appreciation of literature (Coger & White, 1982), to teach social skills (Evenson, 1998) and to enhance content-area curriculum (Kinniburgh & Shaw, 2007).   Readers Theatre is also widely recommended as a highly motivating form of repeated reading.

Benefits of Readers Theatre

Several researchers note that, when compared to simply rereading a passage to improve fluency scores, rereading in order to prepare for a Readers Theatre performance can be much more authentic and meaningful for students (Trousdale & Harris, 1993; Tyler & Chard, 2000; Worthy & Prater, 2002). One reason for this may be the cooperative format; Readers Theatre is a group activity, and for many children, this is more enjoyable than reading alone (Tyler & Chard, 2000). The experience of performing in front of an audience can also be very rewarding, and may increase students' motivation to practice the next script and repeat their success (Evenson, 1998; Martinez, Roser & Strecker, 1998; Worthy & Broaddus, 2002). Corcoran and Davis (2005) found that, after

participating in a Readers Theatre program, ninety percent of their students reported they would like to do Readers Theatre every week. The fun and excitement of preparing for and participating in a live performance make Readers Theatre a highly motivating form of repeated reading (Evenson, 1998; Martinez, et al., 1998; Rasinski, 2003).

Readers Theatre is not only a good motivator; it is also an effective way of improving reading fluency. In addition to the studies cited earlier which showed the connection between repeated reading and fluency, there is research pointing to Readers Theatre in particular as a strategy for fluency improvement. Corcoran and Davis (2005) found that students in their study gained an average of 17 words read correctly per minute as a result of an eight-week Readers Theatre program. Griffith and Rasinski (cited in Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003) reported that the low-achieving fourth-graders in their study made an average fluency gain of three grade levels after participating in a year-long fluency program which included Readers Theatre.

Martinez, et al. (1998) reported that second-graders in their ten-week Readers Theatre project posted reading-rate gains which were more than double those of students in the control group. 24 out of their 28 subjects also improved in their use of prosodic features. My literature review indicates that this study is one of the few, if not the only one, to have measured prosodic accuracy in conjunction with a Readers Theatre program.

Despite the dearth of studies exploring the connection between Readers Theatre and prosody, several writers mention the potential of Readers Theatre to be an effective tool for facilitating prosodic reading. Because intonation, stress and timing are so closely connected to context and meaning, the context-rich setting of Readers Theatre may be an

ideal vehicle for teaching these prosodic elements (Flynn, 2005; Young & Vardell, 1993).

The discovery of meaning is an inherent part of the rehearsal process for any type of

theatre performance. Actors must understand the meaning of their lines, and of how they

relate to the script as a whole. The director, whether a theatre professional or classroom

teacher, is responsible for guiding the actors through the process of achieving this

understanding. Good directors, like good teachers, are skilled at asking questions which

help actors, or students, to discover for themselves the meaning of their own lines and of

the entire text. As their comprehension of the material increases, students are ready to

learn how to use timing, stress and intonation to express the meaning they have

discovered, and to communicate it to their audience.

Kinniburgh and Shaw (2007) suggest that teachers should encourage students to

think of themselves as actors, and should emphasize the fact that actors deliver their lines

expressively. Miller and Schwannenflugel (2006) report that in their study on prosody,

they did not ask their young subjects to read dramatically, but they speculate that if they

had provided dramatic reading instruction, prosodic gains might have been greater. They

suggest that further study of the effects of this variable on prosodic oral reading would be

worthwhile.

The majority of studies on using Readers Theatre to achieve fluency gains have been

conducted with native-English-speaking students, but a few anecdotal accounts have

indicated that Readers Theatre can also benefit English language learners. Lui (2000)

used Readers Theatre with young adult ESL students and reported that it improved

reading and listening skills, as well as social and communicative competence. Forsythe's

1995 article describes how Readers Theatre was used with second graders in a bilingual program. The students were all native Spanish speakers, and all of the scripts were written (by the students) and performed in Spanish. Although Forsythe did not formally measure fluency gains, her anecdotal account indicated an overall improvement in reading fluency, as well as an increase in oral reading confidence, as a result of the project. Other authors also advocate for the use of Readers Theatre with ESL students, noting that it provides an opportunity to practice reading and speaking in various registers (Trousdale & Harris, 1993). Peregoy and Boyle (2001) point out that Readers Theater can be especially helpful in the elementary setting for teaching beginning- and intermediate-level ELLs to read with appropriate expression.

Overall, there seems to be significant evidence in the literature that Readers Theatre provides several benefits for elementary-age students, both ELLs and native English speakers, including improvements in reading fluency, comprehension and oral reading confidence. These benefits are attributed to the fact that Readers Theatre combines the proven strategy of repeated reading with an authentic, meaningful and motivating activity that students enjoy (Rasinski, 2003; Worthy & Broaddus, 2002; Worthy & Prater, 2002).

<div align="center">Summary</div>

In this chapter, I have examined literature on oral reading fluency, its key elements, and its connections to comprehension and silent reading. I have looked particularly closely at the element of prosody and its connection to English language learners. Literature on repeated reading and its role in fluency instruction has been reviewed, and

Readers Theatre has been discussed as a motivating and effective way to utilize the repeated reading strategy.

Two important gaps in the research have been considered. First, there seems to be very little research measuring the effects of a Readers Theatre program on students' use of prosody. Second, studies that have measured overall fluency gains in connection with Readers Theatre have not been conducted on elementary ELLs who are learning to read in their second language. These gaps have led to my research questions: What are the effects of a comprehension-focused Readers Theatre program on second-grade ELLs' use of prosody in oral reading? To what extent do any gains transfer to new, unrehearsed material?   In the following chapter, I will describe the methodology used to help find the answer to these questions.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Readers Theatre, as discussed in Chapter Two, has been used successfully in a variety of educational settings. It has been found to facilitate growth in oral reading fluency and other aspects of reading (Corcoran & Davis, 2005; Forsythe, 1995; Liu, 2000; Martinez, et al., 1998). As previously noted, however, there has been little research done in elementary ESL classrooms, and little that has focused on the element of prosody. The purpose of this study is to address that gap, and to find the answers to the following questions: What are the effects of a Readers Theatre program, with an underlying focus on comprehension, on second-grade ELLs' use of prosody in oral reading? To what extent does any improvement transfer to new material?

In order to find the answers to these questions, I primarily used the action research method. Data was collected through observations and by audio-taping students' performances on pretests and posttests. Tests were scored using a rubric adapted from the Multidimensional Fluency Scale (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991) and the Oral Reading Fluency Scale (NAEP, 1995).

Overview of the Chapter

In this chapter, the methodologies used in this study are described. First, a rationale for and description of the research design is given, along with a discussion of the qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. Second, the data collection protocols are

presented, followed by a detailed account of the procedures used. Next, data analysis methods are detailed, and methods of data verification are discussed. Finally, ethical considerations are presented, along with a description of how those considerations are dealt with in this study.

<div align="center">Research Paradigms</div>

Research for this study was conducted within both the qualitative and the quantitative research paradigms. Qualitative research, as its name implies, has to do with the quality, the nature or essence of what is happening. Its goals typically involve gaining understanding about the problem or situation being studied. Data is gathered from a small, nonrandom sample. In qualitative research, the researchers themselves are usually participants and are often the primary collectors of the data. The findings of a qualitative study are comprehensive, holistic and descriptive (Merriam, 1998).

Qualitative research was appropriate for this project because my ultimate goal was to increase my own understanding of the teaching and learning of prosody. As the teacher, I directly participated in the research and was the one who collected the research data. My sample was small and nonrandom, which was most appropriate for my classroom setting. The random assignment of students to groups, and the use of a control group, both of which would have been required had I undertaken a purely quantitative research design, would not have been practical in this situation, nor would the formal, tightly structured design typical of quantitative research (Biklen & Bogdan, 2003).

This study did, however, incorporate some aspects of the quantitative research paradigm. In addition to descriptive accounts of the experience, data collection included

tests and scales, and the results of these are included in the findings. These numerical statistics constitute the more quantitative part of the study (Biklen & Bogdan, 2003; Merriam, 1998).

Action Research

The specific type of qualitative research utilized in this study was action research. Action research, as defined by McKay (2006) is both 'action', in that it seeks to bring about a change, and 'research', in that data is collected and analyzed. Action research is small-scale; it focuses on a problem in a specific context and setting. It is widely used in the field of education, and typically involves educators doing research on their own work in order to improve their teaching and enhance their students' learning. Although teachers often work collaboratively on action research projects, this type of research can also be done by an individual teacher working alone (Ferrance, 2000; McKay, 2006).

This project lent itself to an action research approach for several reasons. First, the research was conducted by me, in my own classroom, with the intention of improving my own teaching. Second, I focused on a small group of students in a particular context. In addition, I implemented three cycles of an intervention, and needed to have the flexibility to make changes from one cycle to the next. As Ferrance (2000) points out, this cycle of posing questions, collecting data, reflecting on the results and deciding on a new (and possibly different) course of action is an important aspect of the action research process. Action research, she writes, "is about how we can change our instruction to impact students" (p.3), and that, in a nutshell, was the goal of this project.

Data Collection

Setting

Research for this project was conducted at a public elementary school in a large suburban Minnesota school district. The school has a total population of approximately 600 students, with 52% of them qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. During the year this study took place, there were 126 English language learners in the building, representing 14 different home languages. The two most common native languages spoken by ESL students at the school were Spanish and Hmong.

ESL services in the school are delivered, for the most part, using a pull-out model of instruction. Typically, an ESL teacher will pull a few students from two or three different classrooms (all of the same grade level) at one time, and take them all to her room for ESL class. The six students in this study were from two different second-grade classrooms. They worked with me on the Readers Theatre project over a four-week period in April and May, during a 35-minute daily pull-out session in my ESL classroom. Three students in the group, those who were significantly below grade level in reading, were also with me for a leveled reading class later in the day.

Participants

There were six participants in this study, all of whom were in second grade. All were either seven or eight years of age. They were all English language learners; some spoke Spanish as their first language, and others were native speakers of Hmong. Two of the students were boys and four were girls. Using pseudonyms in order to protect their identities, I will briefly describe each participant. In stating their English proficiency

levels, I will use two numbers, with the first number representing the student's speaking

and listening skills, and the second their reading and writing skills. The numbers range

from one to five, with one representing a beginning level, two being a higher beginner or

lower intermediate level, three representing intermediate, four indicating an advanced

level, and five a transitional level (ready to transition out of ESL services). So, for

example, a student who is a 4/1 is considered to be advanced in his/her English speaking

and listening skills, but still in the beginning stage of acquiring English reading and

writing.

These proficiency levels, shown in Table 3.1, are determined by the students' scores

on the TEAE (the Test of Emerging Academic English). The TEAE is a standardized

assessment given to all ELLs across the state. Students who have not yet reached third

grade (including the participants in this study) do not take the written portion of the

TEAE required of older students, so their TEAE assessment consists of having their

teachers complete the Minnesota SOLOM (Standardized Oral Language Observation

Matrix). Although the procedure for completing the SOLOM may vary from one district

to another, in our district the policy is to have the child's classroom teacher and his/her

ESL teacher work together to complete the form. The teachers rate each student on

specific speaking and listening skills, assigning scores from one to five for each skill.

The numbers one to five, as noted above, represent beginning (one) to transitional (five)

levels of oral language development. The bottom portion of the Minnesota SOLOM asks

teachers to assign a level to the student's reading and writing proficiency. The levels

range from beginning to transitional. In assigning the reading/writing scores, teachers

take into account a student's performance both in the mainstream and ESL classrooms, as well as scores on district fluency assessments.

Table 3.1 (below) also notes at what grade level each student was reading at the time of the study (i.e. "mid first-grade" or "late second-grade"). These determinations were based on students' instructional reading levels in the Reading A-Z program, which equate to Fountas and Pinnell levels. The Reading A-Z/Fountas and Pinnell levels each correspond to certain grade levels. The Level J texts used in this study, for example, are at an early second-grade level, so if these texts represent the highest level of material that a student can read and comprehend with teacher support, he or she could be said to be reading at an early second-grade level.

Table 3.1

Student Background Data

Student Name (Pseudonym)	Native Language	English Proficiency Levels	Reading Level
Nancy	Spanish	3/3	Late 1st Grade
Alberto	Spanish	4/3	Late 1st Grade
Maria	Spanish	4/4	Late 2nd Grade
Jessie	Hmong	4/3	Early 2nd Grade
Kao	Hmong	4/3	Mid 2nd Grade
Jack	Hmong	5/4	Late 2nd Grade

Nancy is a native Spanish speaker from Mexico who, at the time of the study, had been in the country for two and one-half years. Her English proficiency level was 3/3. She read at a late first-grade level, and received leveled reading instruction in an ESL reading group. Her decoding skills were advancing rapidly, but she struggled with comprehension.

Alberto was born in the United States, but came from a home where Spanish was the primary language. One of his parents was fluent in English and the other was not. Alberto's English proficiency level was 4/3, and he was reading at a late first-grade level. He received leveled reading instruction in an ESL reading group.

Like Alberto, Maria was also born in the United States and lived in a home where Spanish was spoken. Neither of her parents was fluent in English. At the time of this project, she had an English proficiency level of 4/4, and read at a late-second-grade level. Because she was reading at grade level, she had been placed in a mainstream reading group for leveled reading instruction.

Jessie is a native speaker of Hmong who was born in Laos and came to the United States as an infant. Her English proficiency level was 4/3, and she was reading at a beginning second-grade level. She had recently been moved into the ESL leveled reading group after struggling with comprehension in her mainstream reading group.

Kao was born in the United States and spoke Hmong as her first language. She was in a mainstream reading group, was reading just slightly below grade level, and, at the time this study was conducted, had an English proficiency level of 4/3.

Like Kao, Jack was born in the United States. He lived in a home where both Hmong and English were spoken. Of all the students in the group, Jack had the strongest English speaking and listening skills, with an English proficiency level of 5/4. He read at grade level (late 2nd grade) and received leveled reading instruction in a mainstream group.

In addition to the six students whose data is included in this study, a seventh student, Alicia, was also involved in the Readers Theatre program. Alicia was a native speaker of Spanish, who was both an English language learner and a Special Education student. She received her Leveled Reading instruction in a Special Education reading group, and due largely to her learning disabilities, she read at a pre-kindergarten level. Because Alicia's reading level prevented her from being able to take the pre- and posttests, she was not included as a part of this research. She did, however, participate in the rehearsal process as well as all of the performances. For each script, she was assigned to share a role with another student, who would cue her on when to speak, and then would read the line along with her.

All of the students had been working together with me since the beginning of the school year, and had formed a cohesive group. Before we began class each day, they had a five-minute "snack time", during which they were free to talk amongst themselves about anything they wished. Although they were initially shy, coming from different homerooms and not knowing each other well, they grew steadily closer as the year progressed. They appeared to be equally comfortable talking to each other in English, or separating into native-language groups and conversing in their first languages. They

seemed to especially enjoy teaching members of the other language group little bits of their native tongue, such as how to count in Hmong, or how to greet people in Spanish.

This group was appropriate for this study because they were all at a point in their development where they needed to move from word-by-word reading to more fluent, expressive reading. Our prior classwork had shown that even those members of the group who were reading at or near grade level still tended to read in a robotic fashion. The reasons for this seemed to be the same factors discussed previously in this paper. First, comprehension is more challenging for students learning to read in a second language. Second, even when ELLs do comprehend the meaning of a text, they may lack the prosodic skills necessary to appropriately express that meaning. All of the students in this group struggled with one or both of these challenges, and I hoped that participation in this project would help all of them to move ahead in their journeys towards becoming more proficient readers.

Data Collection Technique 1: Testing

The first data collection technique which was used consisted of pre- and posttesting. Each cycle began with a pretest; every student read the script aloud before we had rehearsed it. This reading was recorded on audio tape and scored using a rubric. Posttests conducted during and after the performance were also audio-recorded and scored using the same rubric. Rasinski (2003) states that rubrics are a more holistic way of assessing fluency than simply measuring the number of words read correctly per minute. The rubric utilized in this study was adapted from the Oral Reading Fluency Scale (NAEP, 1995) and the Multidimensional Fluency Scale (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991).

The NAEP scale assesses a reader's ability to segment text into meaningful phrases; a student who is rated high on the scale would exhibit accurate use of prosody. The Multidimensional Fluency Scale is designed to assess all elements of oral reading fluency, allowing teachers to hone in on specific aspects of fluency that may need greater attention (Rasinski, 2003). Since the purpose of this study was to help my students become more prosodic readers, my adapted rubric utilized the sections of the Multidimensional Fluency Scale which focus on prosody. A copy of the rubric appears in Appendix A.

A problem in using this type of testing as a data collection technique is the subjectivity involved in rating a student's performance on the test. The rater must decide, for example, whether the placement of stress in a student's reading was "reasonably appropriate", or "appropriate". Clearly, this is much more subjective in nature than the process of simply counting the number of words read correctly per minute. Indeed, the fact that it is more challenging to assess prosody than to measure rate and accuracy is, as Dowhower (1991) contends, the reason that teachers often fail to assess it at all.

Despite this difficulty, the assessment of prosody was essential in order to determine what my students had or had not gained from their work in the Readers Theatre program. To guard against the subjective nature of the assessment, and my own bias as the teacher/researcher, each test was scored not only by me, but by a second teacher as well. This process will be described more thoroughly in the "Verification of Data" section.

Data Collection Technique 2: Observation

Observation is something we all do naturally, as part of our everyday lives. According to Kidder (as cited in Merriam, 1998), however, research observation is different from this everyday observation. Research observation, Kidder states, includes four key elements. First, it serves a specific research purpose. Second, it is well-planned. Third, it is systematically recorded. Fourth, there is control on its validity and reliability.

Merriam (1998) echoes Kidder's assertion that planning is an important element of research observation. She advises that, when planning what to observe, the researcher should be mindful of his or her original purpose. My purpose for this study was to determine the effects of a Readers Theatre program on students' use of prosody. With that in mind, I focused my observation on three main areas: routines, teaching and learning.

First, I observed the routines we followed in the Readers Theatre program. I recorded the activities we engaged in, their sequence, and how long we spent on each. Any changes or disruptions to the routine were also noted.

Second, I observed my own teaching. I recorded what I taught and what I did not teach. (For example, did I leave something out that I intended to include?) I also observed the changes in my own teaching from the first cycle to the second and third cycles.

Finally, the students' learning was observed. While the pretests and posttests measured the overall growth numerically, the observations were intended to provide a context for that growth, and to reveal more detailed information about what facilitated the

learning. For example, did one specific activity or lesson seem to spark a breakthrough for a particular student or group of students?

There are several benefits to including observation as part of an action research project. Observation provides a first-hand account of what actually happened in the classroom, and offers context for the more quantitative results provided by testing. In addition, observation affords a more holistic view of the experience than would be provided by test scores alone (McKay, 2006; Merriam, 1998).

Despite its benefits, however, observation also has its drawbacks as a data collection technique. One challenge in this project was the difficulty of recording my observations during a busy school day. I addressed this problem by simplifying the note-taking process, leaving space on the lesson plan itself to write notes about specific elements of the lesson.

The other key problem with observation, as noted by McKay (2006) and Merriam (1998) is that of observer bias. This is a challenge for all observers, as we each bring with us our own beliefs, attitudes and world views, all of which can influence our observations. I addressed this problem in two ways. First, I was mindful of McKay's (2006) advice to prepare mentally by setting aside one's own beliefs about the people and the situation being observed. Second, I did not rely solely on the observations, but used them as a way of triangulating the data obtained from the testing.

Procedures

Materials

The Readers Theatre scripts which were used for this project came from Reading A-Z, part of Learning A-Z, an online resource for educators. Reading A-Z offers downloadable books at all reading levels. At each level, there are also several Readers Theatre scripts which have been adapted from stories at that level. The scripts vary in length according to the reading level, getting longer as the level gets higher. Those used for this project were approximately five minutes in length.

Reading A-Z materials were chosen for this study because they are leveled; this enabled me to ensure that all of the scripts we used were at the same level of difficulty. Differences in students' scores from one cycle to the next, therefore, would not simply be due to the fact that one script was easier than another. All of the scripts used for this study were at Level J in the Reading A-Z program, which corresponds to Fountas and Pinnell's (1999) level J, an early second-grade level. Minor adaptations were made to each script, in order to even out the size of the roles, and to provide enough roles for the number of students involved.

Because there were only three Readers Theatre scripts available at level J, I developed a fourth script (to be used for the transfer assessment) from one of the Reading A-Z stories at the same level. I chose a story which contained a large amount of dialogue, and simply adapted it to a Readers Theatre format. Almost all of the original wording was retained, and the length and structure of sentences remained the same, thus ensuring that this text was at the same reading level as the other three scripts.

Pretests

    For each of the three cycles, the pretest was conducted before the rehearsal process had begun. Prior to the pretest, we read the whole script together as a group twice (without any instruction on prosody) so that students would not be required to do a completely cold reading. Then each student read the entire script by themselves. These individual readings were tape-recorded and used as the pretest.

Instruction/Rehearsal Process

    The routine I followed was based, in part, on the 1998 study by Martinez, et al., whose work, like my own, involved the use of Readers Theatre to improve the reading skills of second-graders. Martinez and her colleagues worked in five-day cycles (spending five days on each script). In contrast, my own study allotted six days for each of the three cycles; this allowed more time to work on comprehension. The same sequence of instructional activities was followed for each cycle, with some exceptions, as described below.

Day one. The first day of each cycle was used for pretesting. As previously noted, we first read the whole script together twice, stopping to work on new or difficult words. In reading along with the students, I read with my normal level of fluency, but did nothing at this point to call their attention to my own use of prosody. After these two read-throughs, each student was pretested individually.

Day two. The second day began with an expressive teacher read-aloud of the script. This provided modeling, which has been shown to be an effective strategy for prosody instruction (Dowhower, 1991; Kuhn, 2004; Schrieber, 1991). The read-aloud was

followed by activities designed to build background knowledge; these varied according to the script on which we were working.

Our first script was titled "Animal Olympics" (Slade, n.d.) and was a story about a group of animal characters who participated in an Olympics-style athletic contest. To build background knowledge, I read the students a brief, nonfiction article about the real Olympics. We used a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the fictional Animal Olympics with the real Olympics. We also compared events in the script with the students' own experience at "Super Kids' Day", a school track and field event in which all of the students had recently participated.

The second script was "Can You Say Pterodactyl?" (Cosgrove, n.d.). The main character was a young pterodactyl who could not pronounce her own name (her name being simply "Pterodactyl"). To build background knowledge, we looked at illustrations of real pterodactyls and discussed other stories students had read which included pterodactyls. We then talked about why it was so difficult for the pterodactyl in the story to pronounce her name, and students generated a list of features which made the word challenging. This was followed by an exercise (described more fully in Chapter 4) designed to help students identify what the characters in the script were feeling.

During the third cycle, we worked on the script "Pinocchio" (Furgang, n.d.). This story did not require as much background-building as the others, because all of the second-graders had recently watched a cartoon version of "Pinocchio" during a class party. We used a Venn diagram again to compare and contrast the cartoon with the version in our script, and repeated the feeling-identification activity.

After the background-building activity, we read the whole script together once, with everyone reading all of the parts. The students then took these copies home, with instructions to keep them there and practice reading them every night. I had made another set of copies to be used at school.

Day three. Day three began with a mini-lesson on timing. I chose a small section of the script and wrote it on the whiteboard. I checked for comprehension by having students retell it in their own words, and we worked as a group to clarify any misunderstandings. I then read that section aloud twice, first with inappropriate timing (failing to pause at the end of a sentence, or pausing incorrectly in the middle of a phrase) and next with appropriate timing. The students agreed that the second reading sounded better, and we worked as a group to identify the specific timing errors I had made in my first reading. Next, we used slash marks to mark the section of text on the whiteboard. Double slashes indicated a longer pause, and a single slash stood for a brief pause. We then went through the first two pages of our scripts line by line, marking the text with slash marks in the same manner. This was done in order increase awareness of timing, and to serve as a visual reminder to students as they practiced their reading.

The students were now working with their "school scripts", having taken the "home scripts" with them the day before. Each school script had a different role highlighted, and following the mini-lesson, we read the text again, with each student reading the part which had been highlighted in his or her script. After each read-through, we rotated scripts, so that every student eventually had a chance to read each role. We stopped

periodically to clarify the meaning of particular lines, and to discuss how our timing

could help to convey that meaning to the audience.

Day four. On the fourth day, our mini-lesson focused on stress. I wrote a sentence from

the script on the board and read it aloud with appropriate stress. I asked students which

word sounded the loudest, and then underlined that word with a thick line. Were there

other words that were a little loud, but not as loud as the one with the thick line? We

identified these and underlined them with thinner lines. We then looked for words that

had been barely audible, and left these with no lines at all. We repeated this process with

another sentence from the script.

Wanting to provide an age-appropriate explanation for why a speaker or reader

would choose to stress a certain word in a sentence, I simply emphasized that we say or

read certain words more loudly because they are more important. In truth, stressed words

also tend to be longer in duration, and higher in pitch, but again, my goal was to keep it

simple, so I focused only on the difference in volume, believing that appropriate pitch

and duration would come naturally as students learned to make their reading sound more

like their natural speech. I told the students that they already knew how to make the most

important words in the sentence sound the loudest. They were already doing it every

time they talked! Good actors, and good readers, always try to make their reading sound

more like talking, and that was our goal. In order to do this, though, the actors have to be

sure that they understand the meaning of what they are reading.

We read through our scripts together, stopping to put thick or thin lines under the

appropriate words in each sentence. We then read the scripts again, with each student

taking a role, and proceeded to rotate scripts as before. At the end of the class period students were assigned the individual roles they would be reading in the upcoming performance. Each student was given a highlighter to take home, and instructed to highlight all of their character's lines in their "home" scripts. I reminded them that good actors rehearse their lines many, many times before a performance, and urged each of them to do the same.

Day five. The mini-lesson for the fifth day of the cycle focused on intonation. (During the first cycle we departed from this routine, due to my fear that too many new concepts were being introduced in one week. I opted, for the first cycle, to spend this day reviewing timing and stress, and waited until the second cycle to introduce intonation.)

To begin the lesson on intonation, I sang part of the Star Spangled Banner (which the second-graders had worked on in their music class) and used hand motions to show how the pitch went up and down. I pointed out to the class that, when we talk, the pitch of our voice goes up and down a little, but not as much as when we sing. I repeated a sentence that I had said to the students a few moments earlier, "It's time to finish up your snacks and come to the table now", and again used hand motions to show the smaller range. Our objective for the day, I stated, was to learn to listen to our voices when we talk or read, and make sure that we're going up or down when we need to. How do good actors know when to make their voices go up or down? Just like with stress or timing, they think about the meaning, and about how they would say it if they were talking.

I wrote a sentence from the script on the board and drew a line above it illustrating where the pitch would naturally go up or down. We repeated this with other sentences

from the script, writing them on the board, saying them slowly, and having students take turns drawing lines to represent the intonation contours of the sentences.

By the third cycle, I added another strategy to increase students' awareness of how they used intonation in their everyday speech. During snack time, individual students would often come to talk to me as I set things up for the upcoming class, telling me about something that had happened at home or in their mainstream classroom. I began to make mental notes of certain sentences they said, and of the intonation contours they used. When we began class a few minutes later, I would say, for example, "Maria just said to me, 'I wish Mrs. K. was going to be here tomorrow to see our play!' and it reminded me of a sentence in our script, when Pinocchio says, 'I wish I were a real boy!'". As I said the two sentences, I used hand motions to illustrate how the pitch of my voice was going up or down. I encouraged students to listen to themselves and each other, and to try and make their reading sound more like their talking.

Following the mini-lesson, students read the script as a group once, with each student now reading her or his own assigned role. Then they were sent off to different corners of the room to practice their own lines independently. I circulated through the room, providing individual coaching. Finally, we gathered in the front of the room. I placed students in the spots where they would be for the next day's performance, and we read the script one more time.

Day six. On the sixth day there was a brief dress rehearsal before the audience came into the room. Our audience members for the three performances included other ESL students and teachers, my students' mainstream classmates, and, for the final performance, the

school principal. After a brief introduction, the student actors presented their Readers Theatre play. After the actors had taken their bows and the audience had left, the second-graders had a few minutes to "debrief", sharing their excitement and their thoughts about the experience. The remainder of the class period was used to administer individual posttests.

<u>Posttests</u>

A posttest was administered at the end of each cycle, and consisted of each student reading the entire script. The readings were recorded on audio tape and scored with the rubric. After the third cycle, a transfer assessment was also conducted, using a new text, at the same reading level as those used for the three performances. This new text was not rehearsed or performed as the others were, but we did read it together as a group twice before the test in order to avoid a completely cold reading. This transfer assessment was intended to determine whether any gains made during the three Readers Theatre cycles would carry over to new material.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

<u>Testing</u>

The pretests and posttests were analyzed by scoring them on a rubric (see Appendix A). Scores on pretests and posttests were compared to determine the rate of growth for students individually, and as a group. Scores were also compared from cycle to cycle, to see if any differences were found. For example, did most students score higher on the pretest for the third cycle than they did on the pretest for the first cycle?

Because the test scores are a more quantitative form of data, establishing internal reliability is important. According to McKay (2006) one way to do this is to provide for inter-rater reliability, by having two researchers examine the same data, using the same method of analysis, to see if they arrive at similar conclusions. I accomplished this by having a second teacher, in addition to myself, score each test. The second teacher works at a different school in the same district and did not know the students in this study. She is familiar with the teaching of oral reading fluency, having taught reading to English language learners in the primary grades for ten years.

In order to be sure we were using the same criteria to score students' reading on the rubric, we conducted a joint practice session before the study began. I had recorded some student reading samples, and we listened to these together, coming to a consensus on how we would score them, and explaining to each other why we had rated the readings as we did. Knowing that we would be working independently, not together, to score the pre- and posttests for the actual study, we agreed that we would discuss any significant discrepancies in order to come to an agreement on the scores.

Observation

Observation data was analyzed according to chronology. Patton (as cited in McKay, 2006) describes this method of data analysis as organizing notes over time, in such a way that they tell the story of what has been observed. In addition, I did some comparative analysis of the observation data, in order to determine how my own teaching may have varied from one cycle to the next.

Verification of Data

Since this study involved both quantitative and qualitative data, more than one form of verification was used. To verify the validity of the test scores, a second scorer was utilized, as described in the previous section. This provided triangulation, which is defined by Biklen and Bogdan (2003) as using more than one source of information to establish a fact.

Ensuring internal validity for the qualitative data obtained through observation is also important. McKay (2006) states that in qualitative research, internal validity can be achieved by carefully recording and analyzing all data, and presenting it in a fair and unbiased manner. In addition to heeding this advice, I guarded against observer bias by having another teacher in my school review all data as well as my analysis of it. McKay (2006) writes that this type of consultation or discussion with peers is one way of achieving credibility in a qualitative study. The use of both testing and observation is also a form of triangulation in itself (McKay, 2006) and further helped to verify the results of the study.

Ethics

This study utilized several safeguards to protect the rights of the participants.

1. Research objectives were explained clearly to parents and guardians (in the consent letter, and in follow-up phone calls) and to the students themselves. Neither students nor their families were deceived as to the purpose of the study.

2. Written permission was obtained from parents or guardians of each student participant. Parents were informed that their child's participation was optional,

and that if they chose not to have him or her participate, there would be no adverse results for the child.

3. Confidentiality of participants was protected by the use of pseudonyms on all data and in my published Capstone. Students' real names were not used, nor were the names of the school or the school district. Audio tapes and test results did not contain students' actual names.

4. The Human Subjects Review process was completed through Hamline University, thus ensuring that any other pertinent ethical considerations were appropriately addressed.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

In this chapter, the methodologies used in this study have been described. The research paradigm has been discussed, along with the procedures for data collection and analysis. The next chapter will present the results of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This study was conducted in order to determine whether a Readers Theatre program with a focus on comprehension and explicit instruction on prosody can help students to improve their use of prosody in oral reading. The previous chapter described the methodologies used in the research, offered a rationale for the research design, and described the setting and participants. Chapter Three also provided a detailed account of the instructional strategies and testing procedures utilized in the study.

Chapter Four presents the results of the study. First, test scores are detailed, and results of the observations are offered. The data are analyzed and patterns and trends are explored. Next, the Interpretation portion of the chapter looks at possible reasons for the results. Finally, the Discussion section describes how the results relate to the original research question.

Presentation of Results

Pre- and Posttest Results

Pretests were administered at the beginning of each cycle. Prior to taking the pretest, I read the script together with the class twice, with everyone reading all of the parts. We stopped to work on words that were new or difficult for the students. Then, one at a time, each child read the script into the tape recorder.

The posttests were recorded at the end of each cycle, after the performance. Again, each student read the entire script. The third cycle was followed by an additional test, designed to determine whether any gains made during the three cycles would transfer to new material. This additional test is referred to as the transfer assessment. As was the case with the pretests, we read through the transfer assessment text twice and worked on the more challenging words, but did not work on comprehension or prosody prior to taking the test.

All of the tests were scored using a rubric (see Appendix A) which was adapted from the Multidimensional Fluency Scale (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991) and the Oral Reading Fluency Scale (NAEP, 1995). The rubric is divided into three sections: timing, stress and intonation, allowing the scorer to consider each prosodic feature separately. The possible points for each section range from one to four. Thus, when points for the three sections of the rubric are added together, the lowest total score a student could earn is three, and the highest is twelve.
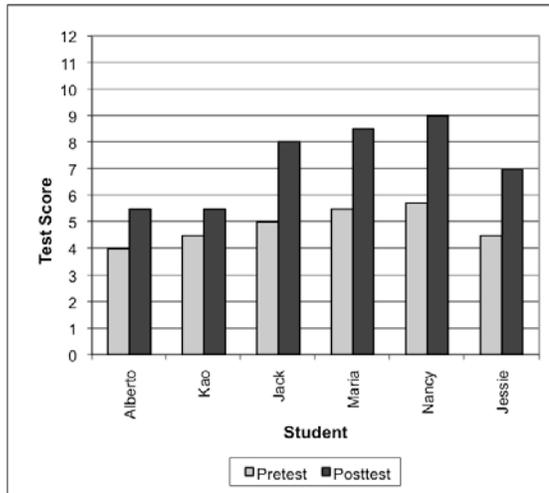
Figure 4.1   Figure 4.2

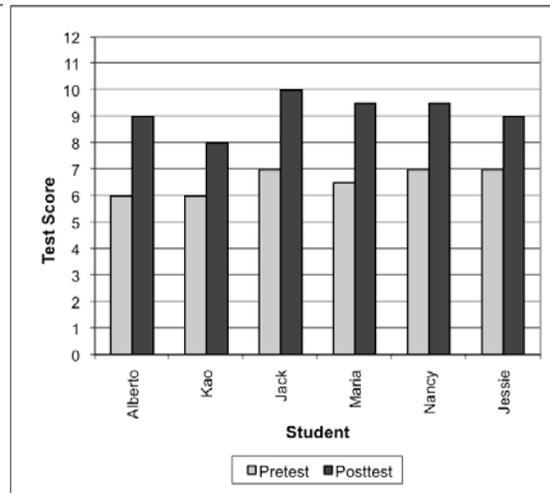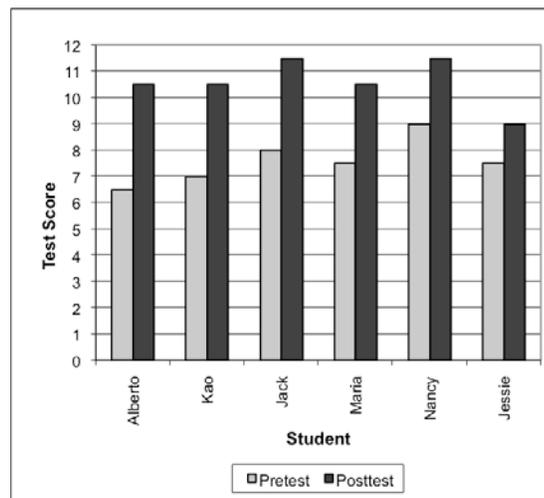*Cycle 1*   *Cycle 2*

Figure 4.3

Cycle 3

As indicated in Figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3, all students made gains from the pretest to the posttest in each of the six-day cycles. For the first cycle, the average gain made from the pretest to the posttest was 2.42 points. The second cycle produced slightly higher gains, with the average student improving by 2.58 points. As a group, the students made the most improvement during the third cycle, showing an average gain of 3.0 points from the pretest to the posttest.

In addition to making gains within each cycle, all of the participants also improved their scores from pretest to pretest. Scores for the Cycle 2 pretest were higher than those for the Cycle 1 pretest, and Cycle 3 pretest scores surpassed those for the Cycle 2 pretest. Figure 4.4 illustrates this trend.

Figure 4.4

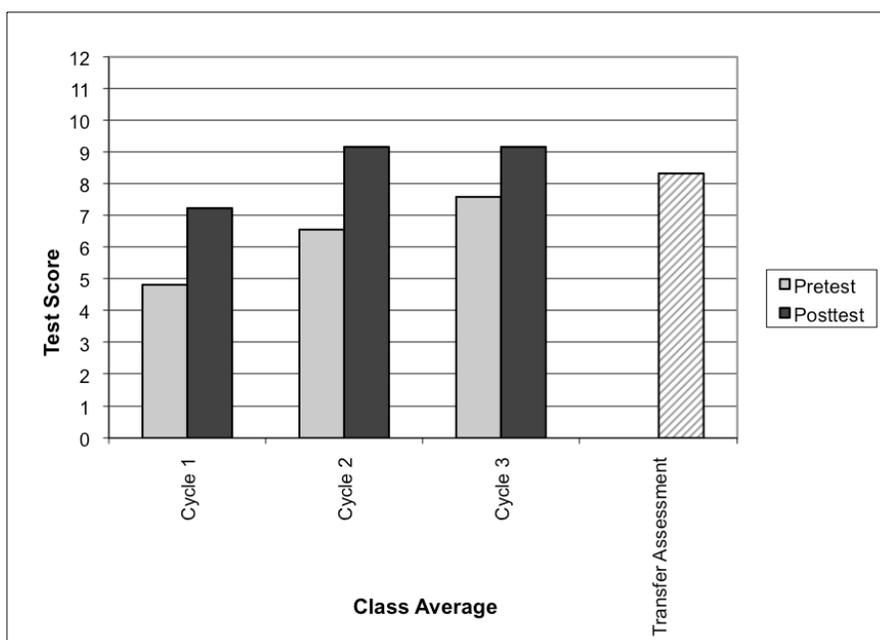*Group Averages for All 3 Cycles Plus Transfer Assessment*

Figure 4.5 illustrates the growth achieved throughout the Readers Theater project as a whole. The first bar for each participant represents the score on the Cycle 1 pretest, administered at the beginning of the project. Each student's second bar shows his or her score on the transfer assessment, which was given at the end of the project. Like the pretests, the transfer assessment was based on an unrehearsed script. The purpose of this final test was to determine whether students could take the skills they had developed during the three cycles and apply them to a new text. The scores show that all six participants made improvements from the beginning to the end of the project. Their overall gains ranged from 3.0 points to 4.5 points. The average gain for the group was 3.5 points. With possible points ranging from 3 to 12, this represents an average overall gain of 39% over the course of the project.

Figure 4.5

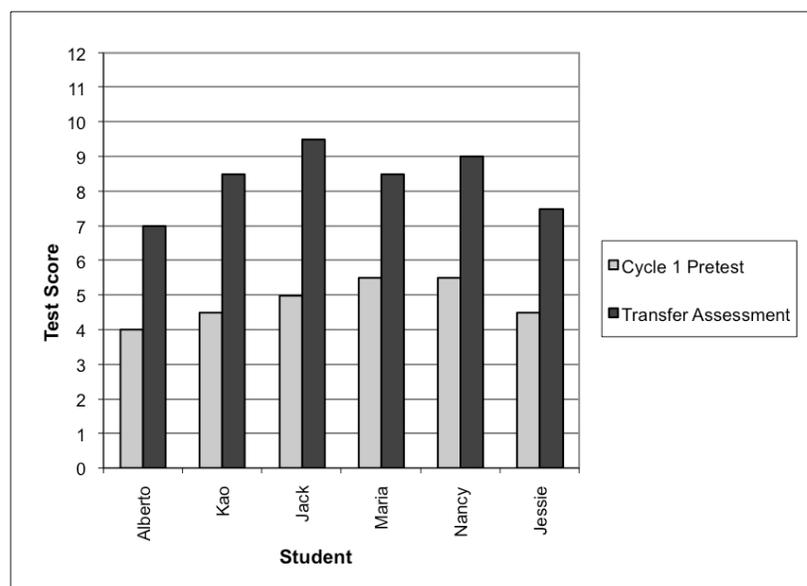*Growth from Cycle 1 Pretest to Transfer Assessment*

Figure 4.6 shows a comparison of pre- and posttest scores broken down by prosodic feature (timing, stress and intonation). The rubric used to score the tests was separated into these three categories to facilitate scoring. The scorer could, for example, listen to the tape once, focusing on the student's timing. After assigning a score for timing, she could listen again, focusing on the student's use of stress, and so on. The range of points a student could earn for each section was from one to four. Points for the three sections were added together to determine a student's total score.

As figure 4.6 shows, there was little difference between the scores on the three different prosodic features. Scores for timing were slightly higher than the others for Cycles 1 and 3, but slightly lower for Cycle 2. Students scored the lowest overall on the feature of stress; stress scores were lower than scores for intonation and timing on Cycles 1 and 3, as well as on the transfer assessment.

Figure 4.6

Averages of Scores Separated by Prosodic Feature
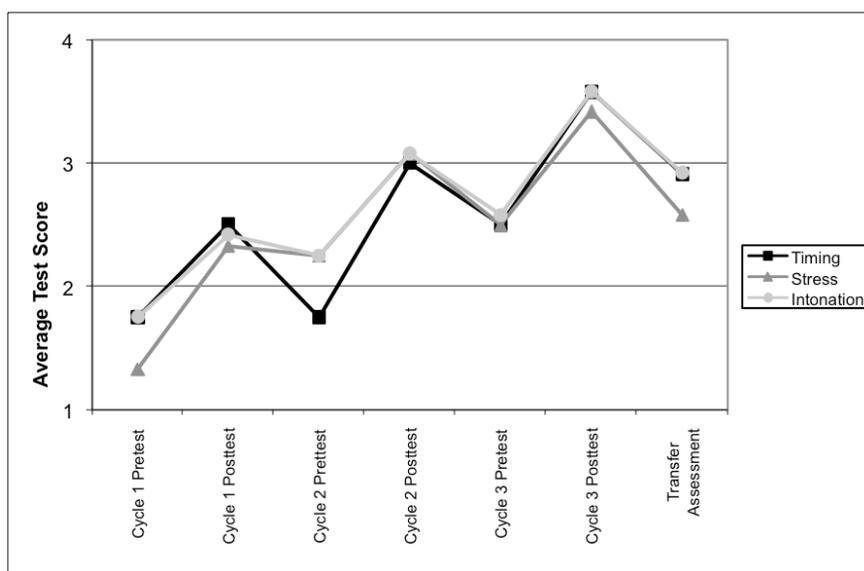
The close proximity of the scores for stress, timing and intonation is not surprising, given the fact that these three features are so interdependent. If, for example, a student makes an error in timing by failing to stop at the end of a sentence, it is likely that he or she is also neglecting to make the appropriate sentence-ending pitch change, thus making an error in intonation as well. Stress, too, is intertwined with intonation; words that receive strong stress typically have a higher pitch. Thus, it would have been surprising if the test results had revealed a great difference between the scores on the three prosodic features.

Scoring

All of the tests, as discussed in Chapter Three, were scored both by me and by a second teacher. We each listened to the taped readings separately to determine the students' scores on the rubric. Comparisons of the two sets of scores showed that, in most cases, our assessments of students' performances on individual features were the same or within one point of each other. When the difference was one point, we arrived at a score by averaging our two assessments. In a few cases in the first cycle, however, our scores differed by two points, and in these situations we discussed the differences in order to arrive at a consensus. Our conversations revealed some possible reasons for the initial differences, which had happened primarily on the feature of stress. My colleague had given higher scores for stress, noting that students were emphasizing the key words in their reading. My own scores for stress tended to be lower, as I noted that students were failing to de-emphasize function words (i.e. *of, a, the*).

For Cycles 2 and 3, our scores were very closely matched, but we experienced discrepancies again in scoring the final transfer assessment. On this test, I had been the one who tended to give higher scores. After consideration and discussion with my colleague, I acknowledged that I had probably inflated my scores for two reasons. First, I instinctively felt that the text used for the transfer assessment was more difficult than those used for Cycles 1, 2, and 3. As explained in Chapter Three, this text had not originally been presented as a Readers Theatre script. It had appeared on the Reading A-Z website as a story, and had been adapted by me into a Readers Theatre format. The original story was at Level J, just as the first three scripts had been, and my adaptation had retained almost all of the original wording, sentence structures and sentence lengths. Still, as I listened to my students reading this text, I began to think that, despite my efforts to ensure consistency in reading levels, perhaps this adapted text was somehow more difficult than the others. In an attempt to compensate for this, I probably tended to be more generous in my scoring. The second reason for my higher scores was my own investment in the project. This final test was an important measure of what my students had learned, and how they could apply their knowledge. It was a test not only of their learning, but of my own teaching. I wanted my students to do well, and this undoubtedly colored my perceptions. My colleague and I agreed that she had been the more objective of the two, and I lowered my scores accordingly.

Observations

In addition to testing, data was collected through observation. As the teacher/researcher, I recorded my observations on each day's lesson plan. I took

particular notice of the routines we followed, and of the teaching and learning that took place related to comprehension and to the prosodic features.

Routines. The original routine planned for this project called for spending five days on each cycle. It soon became apparent, however, that this would not be enough time, due largely to the fact that pre- and posttesting were more time-consuming than had been anticipated. During the first cycle, the decision was made to add one more day to each cycle. Even this was sometimes not enough, and a few students ended up being pulled out of their classrooms at other times during the day in order to finish testing. The lessons themselves also sometimes took longer than I had expected, possibly because the prosodic features of stress, intonation and timing were concepts to which the participants in the study had had very little prior exposure.

Another change to the routine involved the lessons on prosodic features which were taught during each cycle. Although the original plan called for lessons on all three features to be taught in each cycle, it became apparent during the first cycle that this would result in overloading the second-graders with too many new concepts in a short period of time. After the lesson on stress, for example, I observed that only two or three of the students were starting to use stress more appropriately as we read through the script. Others, especially those for whom decoding was more of a challenge, were not yet incorporating the new concept into their reading. Based on this observation, the decision was made to spend more time working on stress, as well as timing, and to save the lesson on intonation for the next cycle.

Comprehension activities. Another focus of observation was the teaching and learning related to comprehension. The second day of each cycle, as described in Chapter Three, was devoted largely to building background knowledge related to the text, and to other comprehension activities. Observations showed that some of the activities were more effective than others.

In building background for the first script, "Animal Olympics" (Slade, n.d.) the most effective activity seemed to be our discussion comparing the athletic competition in the story with "Super Kids' Day", a track and field event which had recently been held at our own school. Some students, for example, had been unclear about the word *event* which was used several times in the script (i.e. "the weightlifting event"). I asked them what kinds of things they had done at Super Kids' Day. When they described a tug-of-war and a three-legged race, I told them that those were different kinds of events. Prior to this discussion, I had read them a non-fiction article about the real Olympics. The article had included descriptions of various athletic events, but for some students, the meaning of the word *event* had still been unclear. When I explained it in the context of their own experience at Super Kids' Day, however, I could see the proverbial light bulbs go on as children grasped the meaning. Both the Olympics article and the discussion of Super Kids' Day were valuable tools for building background knowledge, but the discussion of an event in which the students themselves had participated, and which they were eager to tell about, was clearly the more engaging of the two.

Two comprehension activities proved to be helpful in working with the second text, "Can You Say Pterodactyl?" (Cosgrove, n.d.). The story revolved around a young

character who could not pronounce her name, which was "Pterodactyl". After

determining that the students already had some basic knowledge of pterodactyls, we

looked more closely at what was happening in the story. Why was *pterodactyl* such a

hard word to pronounce? Students generated a list of reasons, including the fact that the

word was long and had "too many parts" (syllables); the presence of a silent *p* at the

beginning; and the fact that the *y* made a different sound than they expected (it was used

as a vowel rather than a consonant). Next, we discussed the idea that actors need to

understand what a character is feeling. They do this by imagining how they themselves

would feel in a similar situation. Students were asked to imagine that they were starting

at a new school (an experience which was familiar to several of them) and were trying to

introduce themselves to classmates, but couldn't say their own name. They stated that

they would feel sad, shy or embarrassed. Finally, the student actors were asked to

identify with the other characters in the story. How would you feel if you introduced

yourself to a new student, but instead of telling you their name, they just stood there, or

mumbled something you couldn't understand? Students responded that they might think

the new student was rude or unfriendly, or could not speak English. We compared these

feelings to those of the characters in the script who reacted negatively to the pterodactyl.

Observations indicated that, when asked to do so by the teacher, all of the

participants were able to identify the feelings which the characters in the story were likely

experiencing in a given situation. This did not mean, however, that they were ready to

translate their understanding into expressive reading. With the exception of two students,

I did not observe a significant improvement in expressive reading during the read-through

which followed this activity. Continued reminders from the teacher, though, to think about what was going on in the story and remember how the character felt, gradually began to result in more appropriate expression.

This feeling-identification activity was repeated in the third cycle with the script, "Pinocchio" (Furgang, n.d.). The repetition seemed to reinforce what students had begun to learn during the second cycle about the connection between feelings and expression. Although frequent reminders to consider the character's feelings were still needed, some students now began to provide these reminders for themselves. One student, Kao, who was reading the line, "That big whale is trying to swallow him!", stopped herself after reading the line once with little expression, and said, "Oh, wait! I think she's feeling scared." Kao then read the line again, with more appropriate stress and intonation. Students also began to accept the idea that their lines needed to "make sense" in order to convey meaning to the audience. After a poor line reading, they would sometimes stop themselves and say, "That didn't make sense." We could then discuss the meaning of the line and the student would try again.

Lessons on timing. Observations made during the lessons on timing indicated that both teacher modeling and the use of visual cues (placing slash marks in the text) were effective strategies. The process of deciding where to place slash marks made students more aware of where they needed to stop or pause while reading. One student, Nancy, had a pronounced habit of plowing right through periods without stopping, and her improvement was immediately noticeable after the students had marked their scripts. Other students seemed to pay less attention to the visual cues, but had obviously picked

up on the modeling. Throughout the cycle and even in the posttest, the specific sentences that I had chosen to use as examples during the lesson were the ones which these students read with the most appropriate timing.

Some of the less proficient readers in the group encountered a timing-related challenge which had not been anticipated. When reading one of the longer sentences in the text, one which consisted of more than one line of type, they tended to stop at the end of the first line, even though there was no sentence-final punctuation there. This surprised me until I considered that, prior to this project, these students had been reading mostly at level H, two levels lower in the Reading A-Z program than the level J texts we were using. A look back at the level H texts revealed that most sentences were slightly shorter and fit into one line of type. For students accustomed to this kind of text, the end of a line of type had probably been serving as a visual cue in itself, one which told them, "This must be the end of the sentence!" A combination of three strategies proved helpful for these students. First, they were reminded to look for the punctuation or slash mark. Second, they were provided with extra modeling to help them hear how the sentence would sound without the unwanted break. Finally, they were asked to think about what the sentence meant and whether their reading of it would make sense to the audience.

<u>Lessons on stress.</u> The concept of stress, or emphasis, was one to which the students in the study had had little or no prior exposure. A key component of teaching stress seemed to be increasing their awareness of it, not only as they listened to teacher-modeled reading, but also as they listed to their own conversations. Two students, Maria and Nancy, very quickly developed the skill of listening to a sentence and identifying the

words that had received strong stress, light stress or no stress. Others took a little longer, but soon began to catch on. By the end of the first lesson, five of the six participants could consistently answer the question, "Which word (or words) in the sentence I just read sounded the most important?" One student however, Alberto, consistently misidentified the most strongly-stressed word, sometimes picking a word that had received no stress. I observed that Alberto used stress appropriately in his everyday English speech, but knew that he had not yet begun to incorporate it into his reading. As we worked on stress throughout the three cycles, he continued to have trouble identifying the stressed words in a sentence. Once they had been identified by other students, though, he eagerly underlined them with a thick line (for the most strongly stressed words) or a thin line (for words that received light stress). He was then able to use these lines as visual reminders to place more stress on the more important words.

The aspect of stress that remained most difficult for all of the students was that of de-emphasizing function words such as *of* or *the*. Our script-marking system called for these words to receive no underlining at all, and it may have been that this lack of a mark was not enough of a visual cue to remind the readers to de-emphasize these words. My expectation had been that, as students began to place strong stress on the most important words, they would naturally reduce stress on the function words, but this was not the case. For example, in the sentence, "He is worried about his son", students learned to place the strongest stress on "worried" and "son", but still placed light stress on "is", which gave the sentence a less natural sound. I pointed out to the class that when I read

this sentence myself, "is" was just barely audible, but the students seemed to have an unshakable belief that, in their own reading, every word must be loud and clear.

One possible reason for this difficulty is that some of the modeling which students receive during their early education may actually encourage the type of word-by-word reading in which every word is considered equally important. Teachers, paraprofessionals and volunteer reading mentors all may unwittingly contribute to the problem to greater or lesser degrees. When a student, for example, mixes up the words "a" and "the", they may be told by the adult to go back and reread the sentence, making sure that the word in question is clearly articulated. When reading aloud to students, that same adult, out of a desire to ensure that the English language learner can comprehend every word, may model a style of reading in which function words receive an inappropriately high level of stress. Determining whether this type of modeling does affect ELLs' ability to de-stress function words is beyond the scope of this study, but would provide an interesting topic for future research.

Lessons on intonation. A key focus of the lessons on intonation was working to increase awareness of the intonation contours of sentences. Although the term "intonation contour" was never used with the students, the goal of the lessons was for them to become aware that the pitch of our voice goes up and down as we speak or read, according to the meaning of the sentence.

Observations of these lessons indicated that marking the text with visual cues, which had been helpful for timing and stress, was going to be less successful for intonation. I modeled the planned task for the class, reading aloud a sentence from the whiteboard, and

then drawing above the sentence a line which went up or down where the pitch of my voice had risen or fallen. It proved to be very difficult for the students to do this themselves, though, and even copying a contour that had been drawn by the teacher seemed to be frustrating. This strategy was subsequently dropped in favor of a technique more familiar to the students. I had seen the school's music teacher indicate the rising or falling of a melody by holding his hand, palm down, in front of his body and moving it up or down along with the notes in a song. I tried this myself, first with a song, and then with a sentence, illustrating that our pitch does indeed change as we speak or read, but not as much as when we sing. The second-graders quickly responded to this, using their hands to show pitch contours, first of my sentences, and then of their own sentences. Once again, connecting to something with which the students were already familiar proved to be the more effective strategy.

<u>Student Reactions</u>

Although quantifying student attitudes towards the Readers Theatre project was not a part of this study, a few anecdotal observations may help to provide context for the findings. In a post-performance discussion at the end of the third cycle, the participants were asked, "What did you like about doing Readers' Theatre? What didn't you like?" The next day, students were asked to expand on their answers from the day before as they wrote about the Readers Theatre experience in their journals. The following is a sampling of comments from both the discussion and the journal entries.

"I liked having an audience."

"I was nervous at first."

"I was shy for the first one, but less shy for the next one."

"I liked it when our class [the student's mainstream classmates] came to

 watch."

"I was shy when Mr. W. [the school principal] came to the room."

"I liked it when Mr. W. came!"

"I didn't like being an old person." [The student had played the role of

 Pinocchio's father.]

"I liked being Pinocchio!"

"I had expression!"

"I liked when we learned about how our voices go up and down."

"It was fun at Readers Theater."

"I had a lot of fun!"

Alicia, the Special Education student (who participated in the Readers Theatre

process but did not take pre- or posttests) also recorded her thoughts about the experience

in her journal. Although her entry included no writing, it did show a picture of seven

students standing in front of a seated audience. All were standing tall, holding their

scripts and smiling from ear to ear.

<div align="center">Interpretation</div>

<u>Factors Contributing to Student Growth</u>

As a group, and as individuals, the participants experienced improvement in their

prosodic reading skills during the course of this project. Several factors seem to have

contributed to this growth, including repeated reading, comprehension work, explicit instruction on prosodic features, and the performance element of Readers Theatre.

Repeated reading was a core element of this project. During the course of each cycle, the class read the text between fifteen and twenty times. Some readings involved all students reading all of the parts, and others called for each student to read only one part. Even when only reading one part, students had the opportunity to hear the other parts being read. By the time individual roles were assigned, the poorer readers had heard their parts read several times by their more fluent peers and by the teacher, who filled in for absent students. In addition to the repeated reading done in class, most students reported that they had practiced their scripts at home, especially on the eve of the performance.

The work that we did on comprehension was another factor contributing to student growth. Building background knowledge, having students retell the story in their own words, and encouraging them to identify characters' feelings all helped them to grasp the meaning of the texts. Explicit instruction on stress, intonation and timing gave them the awareness and the tools needed to begin to express that meaning through prosodic reading.

Finally, the performance aspect of Readers Theatre was a strong motivator. All students are willing to work harder at an activity that they enjoy and, as evidenced by the student comments quoted earlier, these second-graders clearly enjoyed the rehearsal and performance process. They had a clear goal in mind, to do their best for their audience, and they worked hard to achieve it.

<u>Individual Differences</u>

Like any group of students, the participants in this study all possessed different strengths and struggled with different challenges. These personal characteristics may help to explain some of the differences in individual achievement that can be seen in the test results.

Jack, for example, had the highest level of reading proficiency in the group. Prior to the beginning of this project, his reading had been assessed at a late second-grade level. Of all the participants, he scored highest on the transfer assessment. He also showed the greatest gain from the beginning of the project until the end. Jack was in a mainstream group for Leveled Reading, and had been reading books that were more difficult than the texts we used for this project. Decoding, therefore, probably did not pose a great challenge for him, and he may have been able to devote more of his attention to comprehension and expression of meaning. In contrast, Alberto, who was the poorest reader in the group, was in the ELL Leveled Reading group, where we had been reading books at a slightly lower level than those used in the study. For him, the Readers Theatre scripts presented a greater decoding challenge. The need to expend more energy on decoding may have left him with less attention to devote to expressive reading. Alberto ended up with the lowest score on the transfer assessment, and received the lowest scores on most of the pre- and posttests throughout the study.

Nancy started the project with a reading proficiency level only slightly higher than Alberto's but ended up being one of the top scorers on most of the tests, and received the second highest score on the transfer assessment. It should also be noted that, of all the

students in the group, Nancy had been in the United States for the shortest amount of time (two years and four months). Nancy had two individual characteristics which may help to account for her success. First, she seemed to love any kind of performing. She had danced with much enthusiasm in the school talent show, and had joined the drama club, performing in two plays at all-school assemblies. She was very excited about performing our Readers Theatre for an audience and was, in fact, disappointed that we would not be performing for the whole school. Second, Nancy seemed to have an ear for pitch. She was very responsive to the lessons on intonation, and commented in her journal that she liked learning "how our voices go up and down". I later learned that Nancy had come from a musical family. Both of her parents were musicians who performed in a mariachi band. It seems likely that her exposure to music, probably from the time of her birth, made it easier for Nancy to hear the rhythms and melodies of language, even a language which was relatively new to her.

While Nancy's natural inclination towards performing may have boosted her success, the reverse may have been true for Jessie. She was a shy girl who seemed to be lacking in confidence. Like her peers, she was excited about the approach of the first performance, but was clearly nervous at the same time. She read well in front of the audience, though her voice was very quiet, and felt good enough about this initial experience to ask for a larger role in the second cycle. Although her confidence increased as the project progressed, her facial expressions and body language indicated that she was still more nervous than the other students. She also appeared to be nervous

and somewhat embarrassed about reading into the tape recorder, and I believe she did not read as well on the pre- and posttests as she had in rehearsals.

Like Jessie, Kao also had a tendency to be shy, but her shyness did not appear to adversely affect her reading performance, perhaps because it was overshadowed by another characteristic: a willingness to work very hard. In addition to her work ethic, Kao had another advantage; her father was very involved in her education, and she had often mentioned that they read together every night. On the day before the first performance, I had reminded the class to practice their scripts at home that evening. Ever the conscientious student, Kao asked how many times they should read it. I suggested they read the whole script twice and their assigned part at least ten times. When asked the next day if they had done so, most students could not give an unqualified "Yes", but Kao reported, "My dad made me read it twenty times."

Another quality which may have affected individual performances was a desire to please the teacher. One student, Maria, seemed to exhibit this characteristic more than the others. She was very attentive during lessons, and often incorporated phrases that had been used by the teacher into her own comments, such as when she said, "That's right Ms. Daly, we don't want to read like robots!" Maria could see that expressive reading was important to her teacher, and thus it became important to her as well.

The desire to please, the willingness to work hard, shyness, musical background, and strong or weak decoding skills all may have played a part in student achievement. Maturity levels and developmental differences likely were factors as well. In addition to individual differences, though, pedagogical choices affected student achievement, and the

next section includes an exploration of how different choices, in some cases, could potentially help to enhance student learning.

<div align="center">Discussion</div>

The results presented in this chapter point to answers to the research questions which were the basis of this study. First, the research sought to determine the effects of a Readers Theatre program on the participants' use of prosody in their reading. The findings indicate that the Readers Theatre program, with its focus on comprehension and instruction on prosodic features, resulted in a clear improvement in the prosodic reading of all six participants. All students exhibited a more appropriate use of timing, stress and intonation in the posttests than they did in the pretests; this was true for all three cycles.

Observational evidence showed that the program also had the effect of increasing the second-graders' awareness of stress, intonation and timing, and of the role these features play in oral reading. Student comments and self-corrections indicated that thinking of themselves as actors helped the participants to begin to develop an awareness that the purpose of oral reading is to convey meaning to an audience, and that to accomplish this, the actor/readers need to understand the meaning themselves.

The second question posed in this study focused on transfer, and asked whether or not any gains made in prosodic reading would carry over to new material. The results show that this question was answered in the affirmative. This can be seen by looking at the pretest scores for Cycles 1, 2 and 3, and for the transfer assessment. After the Cycle 1 pretest, scores for each successive pretest improved for all six students. For four of the students, this trend continued with the transfer assessment; the transfer assessment score

was higher than the Cycle 3 pretest score. The other two students received the same score on the transfer assessment as they had on the Cycle 3 pretest, but they still did significantly better on this final test than they had on the first pretest at the beginning of the project. The fact that none of the students went "back to square one" when presented with a new text indicates that they were able to apply some of what they had learned in the previous cycle to the new text, even before the process of lessons and rehearsals on this new text had begun. Further evidence of the transfer effect can be seen in the observation notes, as students, during the second and third cycles, began to self-correct, or in some cases to correct each other, in order to achieve more prosodic reading.

Despite the positive results, several changes to the design and implementation of the study could potentially have resulted in increased student learning. Most importantly, allowing seven days for each cycle rather than six would have been helpful. In addition to providing for a less hectic pace in general, the extra day would have meant that more time could be spent on pre-teaching vocabulary. While some vocabulary work was incorporated into the comprehension lessons, a more focused approach might have helped students to become comfortable with the more difficult words in the script, freeing them to focus on prosody.

Limiting prosody instruction to one feature per cycle might also have enhanced learning. Focusing on timing during the first cycle, introducing stress during the second cycle, and saving intonation for the third cycle would have given students a chance to master one concept before being introduced to the next. A variation on this idea would be to spread the three cycles over a longer time, allowing a few weeks in between. This

would enable the young readers to practice the new skill in the context of their regular reading curriculum, applying it to a variety of different texts.

Summary

In this chapter, the results of the study were presented. Test scores were given, and observation notes were summarized. Analysis of the data included an examination of trends and patterns. The Interpretation section explored possible reasons for the results, from both group and individual perspectives. Finally, the Discussion section connected the results to the original research questions and offered suggestions for potential changes in the research design.

The final chapter will summarize what I have learned as a result of this research project and the impact it may have on my teaching. The limitations of the study will be discussed, as well as potential topics for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The previous chapter discussed the results of this study, presenting and analyzing both test scores and observational data. The chapter also included an explanation of possible reasons for the results, and a discussion of how those results serve to answer the research questions. Chapter Five will conclude the study by summarizing the findings and discussing how they relate to the pertinent literature. The implications of the study will also be explored, along with its limitations, and suggestions for future research will be offered. The chapter will conclude with a few final comments.

Study Summary

The purpose of this study has been to determine the effects of a comprehension-based Readers Theatre program on second-grade ELLs' use of prosody in oral reading. In addition, the study sought to learn whether any gains made in the participants' prosodic reading would transfer to new texts that had not been rehearsed. In order to learn the answers to these questions, the Action Research method was used. Data was collected through observation and through the pre- and posttesting of participants. Tests were scored using a rubric adapted from the Multidimensional Fluency Scale (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991) and the Oral Reading Fluency Scale (NAEP, 1995).

This study builds on previous research related to the use of repeated reading in general, and Readers Theatre in particular, as a tool to improve oral reading fluency. As

detailed in Chapter Two, S. Jay Samuels (1979) and numerous other researchers have shown repeated reading to be effective at increasing reading fluency. The National Reading Panel (2000) reviewed 77 experimental studies on repeated reading and reported that, when combined with feedback and guidance, repeated reading resulted in meaningful improvements in students' reading expertise, specifically in the areas of word recognition, fluency and comprehension. Two other notable studies, by Dowhower (1987) and Kuhn (2005), showed that repeated reading also produced significant gains in the prosodic accuracy of students' oral reading.

Readers Theatre was utilized in this study because it has been shown in the literature to be an effective and motivating form of repeated reading (Rasinski, 2003; Tyler & Chard, 2000; Worthy & Prater, 2002). Several studies found that Readers Theatre produced gains in two aspects of reading fluency, those of speed and accuracy (Corcoran & Davis, 2005; Griffith & Rasinski, cited in Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003; Martinez, et al., 1998). Only one of these studies, however (Martinez, et al., 1998), also measured the third element of fluency, that of prosody or expression. Martinez and her colleagues reported that 24 of their 28 second-grade participants improved in their use of prosodic features as a result of a Readers Theatre program. My literature review indicated that this study is one of the few, if not the only one, to have measured gains in prosodic accuracy as a result of a Readers Theatre project. Although the study included some students who were English language learners, it was conducted in a mainstream classroom rather than an ESL setting. Several authors (Forsythe, 1995; Liu, 2000; Peregoy & Boyle, 2001) advocate the use of Readers Theatre with English language learners, but there seems to

be little or no research documenting the effects of such a program on the ability of ELLs to read aloud with prosodic accuracy. This study attempts to help fill that gap.

The results of this study, as described in Chapter Four, showed that the rehearsal and performance of Readers Theatre scripts, combined with work on comprehension and the prosodic features, produced clear improvement in prosodic reading for all of the participants. The average gains made from the pretest to the posttest in a given cycle were just under 30%. These findings corroborate the results of earlier research showing that repeated reading in general (Dowhower, 1987; Kuhn, 2005) and Readers Theatre in particular (Martinez, et al., 1998) can be effective in teaching elementary school students to read with greater prosodic accuracy. Further, they expand on the earlier findings by showing that, at least in this limited study, such results can be obtained not only in a mainstream classroom, but in an ESL setting as well.

Earlier research showed that repeated reading produced greater speed and accuracy, not only on the practiced texts, but also on new material (Dowhower, 1989; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003; Samuels, 1979; Tyler & Chard, 2000). The findings of this study indicate that this type of transfer is possible not only for speed and accuracy, but also for the third element of fluency, that of expression or prosody. After the Cycle 1 pretest, scores for each successive pretest improved for all six students. Like the pretests, the transfer assessment was also based on unrehearsed material. It was designed to show whether students could incorporate the prosodic skills gained during the lessons, rehearsals and performances of the three cycles into the reading of a new text. Results of the transfer assessment showed that, from the beginning to the end of the project,

students' scores on the rubric increased an average of 3.5 points. With the possible point range on the rubric being from 3 to 12, this equates to an overall improvement of 39% over the course of the project.

<center>Limitations</center>

There are several limitations which must be considered in regard to this study. These include the small number of participants, the non-random assignment of students to the group, the absence of a control group, the short duration of the study, and the subjective nature of the rubric used in the assessments.

The restrictions of the school schedule prevented the use of a larger group of students for this study. The inclusion of only six participants means that the results cannot be generalized; it cannot be assumed that similar results would be obtained with other groups of second-grade ELLs. Because students' ESL class times were dictated by the schedules of their mainstream classrooms, it was not feasible to create two groups, randomly assigning students to either an experimental group, which would participate in the Readers Theatre project, or a control group, which would not. Had this been possible, it would have allowed for a comparison of the gains made by the two groups. With no control group, it cannot be assumed that the gains achieved by the participants were due strictly to their participation in the Readers Theatre project.

The short duration of the study also constitutes a limitation. From the initial pretest to the final transfer assessment, the project covered only a four-week period. Extending the timeline, so that an additional transfer test could be administered several weeks after

the third cycle, would have made it possible to see whether students were retaining what they had learned about expressive reading.

Perhaps the most notable limitation of the study is the subjective nature of the rubric which was used to score the pre- and posttests. Use of the rubric requires the scorer to make judgments about the appropriateness of the reader's timing, stress and intonation. Two scorers could potentially assign two different scores to the same reading. As described in Chapter Four, this was sometimes the case as my colleague and I each listened independently to the taped readings. There is ample room for disagreement, and it is not surprising that questions would arise. Was the reader's use of stress "appropriate" or only "reasonably appropriate"? Was the student's intonation "flat" or did it include "some pitch variation"? Indeed, when compared to the relative precision with which a reader's speed and accuracy can be measured, the assessment of prosody is decidedly messy.

Future Research

The results of this study leave a number of unanswered questions which point to potentially useful topics for future research. Several of these questions are listed below:

- How do the rate and accuracy of a student's reading correlate with his or her ability to read with appropriate expression? Do students who can read more words correctly per minute tend also to score higher on measures of prosody?

- Would the type of prosody assessment used in this study be a reliable predictor of how students would score on a comprehension assessment based on the same texts?

- Is there a connection between musical aptitude and mastery of the prosodic features?

- Which is most effective in teaching the prosodic features: visual cues, teacher modeling, or a combination of the two?

- Does the type of modeling we provide as we read aloud to ELLs, or the fact that we may require them to clearly pronounce each word when they read aloud to us, contribute to their difficulty in de-stressing function words?

Implications

The title of Sarah Dowhower's 1991 article accurately characterizes the lack of attention that has been devoted to the issue of expressive reading. In "Speaking of Prosody: Fluency's Unattended Bedfellow", Dowhower refers to rate, accuracy and prosody as the three bedfellows of oral reading fluency, and notes that the bulk of fluency research, and of fluency instruction, has been focused only on rate and accuracy. Yet, if the ultimate purpose of reading is to make meaning out of text, then, given the connection between comprehension and prosody, educators clearly need to focus more intently on this neglected bedfellow. As discussed in Chapter Two, reading experts are not all in agreement as to whether comprehension must be achieved first in order for prosodic reading to follow, or whether prosodic skills must be exercised first, in order for comprehension to occur. They do agree, however, that the link between prosodic oral reading and comprehension is undeniably strong. Since both prosody and comprehension can prove particularly challenging for struggling ELL readers, it seems clear that both, along with rate and accuracy, should receive ample attention in elementary ESL

classroom instruction. Failing to include them in our teaching, and in our assessments, is doing a disservice to our students.

Although there may be no way for teachers to measure prosodic accuracy with absolute precision, instruments such as the Oral Reading Fluency Scale (NAEP, 1995) and the Multidimensional Fluency Scale (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991), upon which the rubric in this study was based, can be valuable tools. They provide teachers with an opportunity to obtain a more holistic assessment of fluency than can be achieved by testing only for rate and accuracy. The prosody assessment done for this study helped me to see my students' growth over a period of time, and to pinpoint certain elements that needed more attention. In addition, the assessment process helped to develop my own ear for prosody, and I believe I will be more skilled at listening for this key element as I make the prosodic features a regular part of my oral reading fluency assessments.

Final Comments

In this study, Readers Theatre was explored as one way to provide prosody instruction with an underlying focus on comprehension. The project was successful at increasing students' awareness of timing, stress and intonation. It resulted in clear improvement in their ability to use these prosodic features to express the meaning of a text to their audience.

Readers Theatre is a flexible instructional tool that can take many different forms in the ESL or mainstream classroom. It is a highly motivating form of repeated reading that can be utilized with a variety of ages and reading levels. In the years to come, I plan to use Readers Theatre more extensively in my own classroom, as I strive to help my

students learn to read, not only with speed and accuracy, but with the prosodic mastery

that will enable them to understand and communicate meaning. After all, as my student

Maria so aptly put it, "We don't want to read like robots!"

APPENDIX A

Rubric

Rubric

Timing

Level 1: Reads primarily in a word-by-word fashion, with little sense of phrase boundaries. Occasional two-word and three-word phrases may occur, but these are infrequent.

Level 2: Reads primarily in two-word phrases with occasional three- and four-word phrases. Some word-by-word reading may be present. Word groupings may be awkward and unrelated to the larger meaning of the sentence or passage.

Level 3: Reads primarily in three- or four-word phrases. Some smaller phrases and some run-on sentences may still be present. Most of the phrasing is appropriate and preserves the author's meaning.

Level 4: Reads primarily in longer, meaningful phrases. Timing/phrasing expresses the meaning intended by the author.

Stress

Level 1: Does not use stress appropriately. All words may be stressed equally, or emphasis may be inappropriately placed.

Level 2: Some sentences are read with appropriate stress, but in most cases emphasis is still not placed in a way that communicates the meaning of the text.

Level 3: Stress is reasonably appropriate and, in most cases, is consistent with the author's intended meaning.

Level 4: Stress is primarily used in an appropriate manner to express the meaning intended by the author.

Intonation

Level 1: Intonation is flat. There is little or no variation in pitch.

Level 2: Some pitch variation occurs, but in most cases, intonation is not used to mark the endings of sentences and clauses appropriately.

Level 3: Most intonation is appropriate, though some sentences may still have flat intonation or inappropriate intonation contours.

Level 4: All or almost all phrase, clause and sentence boundaries are marked with appropriate intonation which is consistent with the author's intended meaning.

Adapted from the Multidimensional Fluency Scale (Zutell and Rasinski, 1991) and the NAEP Oral Reading Fluency Scale (NAEP, 1995).

APPENDIX B

"Animal Olympics" Script

Animal Olympics

Adapted from an original script by Joe Slade

<u>Characters:</u>

Narrator 1

Narrator 2

Bongo, a monkey

Cheetah

Kangaroo

Dolphin

Seal

Elephant

Narrator 1:   Bongo woke up early on the day of the Animal Olympics.

Bongo: I am very excited! I am sure I can win a gold medal!

Narrator 2:   The Animal Olympics were being held at the zoo. All the young

               animals were invited to compete in the games.

Narrator 1:   The first event was running.

Bongo: I am a good runner. I am sure I will win the race.

Cheetah: I'm the fastest runner on earth.

Narrator 2:   The animals lined up at the starting line.

Narrator 1: Bongo had only run three steps when the winner crossed the finish line.

Cheetah: I was first! I won the gold medal!

Bongo: I was last. I am not worried. There are still five events left. I will win the long jump. I am a great jumper.

Kangaroo: I practice my jumping every day.

Narrator 2: Bongo did not even reach the sand pit.

Kangaroo: I jumped to the end of the sand pit! I am the winner!

Bongo: I am last. I am not worried. There are still four events left. I will win at swimming. I am a great swimmer.

Dolphin: Swimming is my favorite event.

Narrator 1: Bongo had only swum three strokes when the winner reached the end of the pool.

Dolphin: I am the fastest swimmer! I get the gold medal!

Bongo: I am last. I am not worried. There are still three events left. I will win the diving event. I am a great diver.

Seal: But seals are the best divers.

Narrator 2: Bongo made his very best dive. But he only scored five points.

Seal: I scored ten points! I am the winner!

Bongo: I am last. I am not worried. There are still two events left. I will win the weightlifting contest. I am very strong.

Narrator 1: Bongo used all his strength to lift the barbells.

Elephant: I have lifted much more than anyone else. I am the winner of the gold

              medal!

Bongo: I am last. I am very worried. There is only one event left. I have to win

              it to get a gold medal.

Narrator 2:   The last event was gymnastics.

Bongo: I am worried that the other animals are better at gymnastics.

Narrator 1:   The cheetah went first.

Cheetah: I am not very good. I only scored three points.

Kangaroo: I was worse. I only got two points.

Elephant: I am very clumsy. I only scored one point.

Seal: I didn't score any points.

Narrator 2:   Then, it was Bongo's turn.

Bongo: I was perfect! I scored all ten points! I won the gold medal!

Everyone: Way to go, Bongo!

APPENDIX C

"Can You Say Pterodactyl?" Script

Can You Say Pterodactyl?

Adapted from an original script by Stephen Cosgrove

Characters:

Narrator 1

Narrator 2

Narrator3

Pterodactyl

Duck

Wren

Owl

.Narrator 1:   There was once a very rare creature called a pterodactyl.

Narrator 2:   She had big, leathery wings. She had a big, bony beak.

Narrator 3:   But her name, she could barely speak.

Pterodactyl: My name is Patero whack datal!

Narrator 1:   The pterodactyl couldn't say "pterodactyl".

Narrator 2:   She would take a big breath.

Narrator 3:   She would scrunch up her beak, and she would say….

Pterodactyl: Peter doctor lyt!

Narrator 1:   One day, she met a duck.

Duck: Well, hello, there, strange creature. I'm Duck. Who are you?

Narrator 2:   The pterodactyl took a deep breath. She scrunched up her beak.

Pterodactyl: Patero patero whack whack datal!

Duck: Oh my, what a rude noise to make!

Narrator 3:   And the duck flew away. Later that day, the pterodactyl happened on a small bird in a tree.

Wren: Hi! I'm Wren! Who are you?

Narrator 1:   The pterodactyl took a really big breath. This time she was going to get it right. She was going to make a friend.

Pterodactyl: Paw paw tero tero wrack wrack tow tow whack whack tile tile tattle!

Wren: Oh my! That's a very ……….. unusual name.

Pterodactyl: Oh, that was even worse than before!

Narrator 2:   And even worse, she burped at the same time. She blasted the little wren right off the branch.

Pterodactyl: I'm sad as sad can be.

Narrator 3:   She sat sadly for a time, and then an owl landed beside her.

Owl: Who are you?

Pterodactyl: I'm nobody, because I can't pronounce my name.

Owl: But you must be somebody, because I know your name. When you rip something, what do you do?

Pterodactyl: You tear it.

Owl: Good. And what do you use to pin a paper to the wall?

Pterodactyl: A tack.

Owl: Now, make the T in tack a D, and set the T next to a tree, which is really

what?

Pterodactyl: Tall!

Owl: Now, put it all together.

Pterodactyl: Tear a dack tall!

Owl: You got it. I'm an owl and you are a pterodactyl. Tear a dack tall!

Narrator 1:   From then and thereafter, the pterodactyl had lots of friends.

Narrator 2:   Together, they sat on the bending branch and sipped tea.

Duck: I am Duck.

Wren: I am Wren.

Pterodactyl: I am the tear a dack tall. Pterodactyl!

Narrator 3:   And she was, and she is to this very day.

Everyone: And that's how the pterodactyl learned to say her name.

APPENDIX D

"Pinocchio" Script

Pinocchio

Adapted from a traditional tale, retold by Kathy Furgang

<u>Characters:</u>

Narrator 1

Narrator 2

Geppetto

Pinocchio

Blue Fairy

Onlooker 1

Onlooker 2

Narrator 1:   Once there was an old man who carved himself a fine wooden puppet.

Geppetto: I will name you Pinocchio. I will teach you to walk and talk like a real

                boy.

Pinocchio: Thanks, father, but when can I go out to play?

Geppetto: First you must go to school. I will sell my only coat to buy you a

                schoolbook.

Narrator 2:   But when Pinocchio left the house he did not listen to his father.

Pinocchio: School? No way! I will trade my book for a ticket to a puppet show!

Narrator 1:   Pinocchio ran away. He stole, cheated and lied. When he lied, his

nose grew longer and longer.

Narrator 2:   One day a kind Blue Fairy appeared to Pinocchio.

Blue Fairy: What a nose! You should tell the truth.

Pinocchio: But I always tell the truth!

Narrator 1:   His nose grew and grew some more.

Pinocchio: Oh Blue Fairy, why am I made of wood? I wish I were a real boy.

Blue Fairy: If you can be good and tell the truth, your wish will come true. No more

lies!

Narrator 2:   Just then, people gathered on a nearby beach.

Onlooker 1:   Look, it's Geppetto! What is he doing?

Onlooker 2:   He is worried about his son. He is trying to find him.

Onlooker 1:   But there are giant whales out there in the water! And where is his coat?

Onlooker 2:   On no! That big whale is trying to swallow him!

Onlooker 1:   Pinocchio can see that his father is in trouble. He's swimming after him!

Pinocchio: Here I come, father! I will save you!

Onlooker 1:   Oh look! A giant whale just gobbled up Pinocchio!

Narrator 1:   And who do you think he met inside the whale's belly? It was his father,

Geppetto!

Geppetto: Pinocchio, I am over here!

Pinocchio: Father, I am so sorry I ran away.

Narrator 2:   Just then, the whale spit Pinocchio and Geppetto out and they swam to

safety.

Pinocchio: Father, I will never cheat or lie again!

Geppetto: I always knew you were a good boy.

Narrator 2:   Pinocchio returned home and did as he promised. And soon the Blue

                Fairy came to him again.

Blue Fairy: You have kept your promise to be good and tell the truth. Now close your

                eyes and make a wish.

Narrator: And on that day, Pinocchio became a real live boy.

Everyone: And he never lied again!

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APPENDIX E

"Leopard, Ram and Jackal" Script

Leopard, Ram and Jackal

Adapted from an African folktale retold by Eliot Kays Stone.

<u>Characters</u>

Narrrator 1

Narrator 2

Leopard

Mr. Ram

Mrs. Ram

Jackal

Narrator 1:	Once upon a time, there was a leopard who went out hunting. He came upon the house of Mr. and Mrs. Ram.
Narrator 2:	Leopard was a great hunter, but he had never seen a ram before. When Mr. Ram came out of the house, Leopard was a little afraid.
Leopard:	Hello, friend. Who are you?
Mr. Ram:	I am Ram. Who are you?
Leopard:	I am only Leopard.
Narrator 1:	Leopard was so scared, he ran straight home.
Narrator 2:	Then he went to see his friend, Jackal. Jackal's house was close by.

Leopard: I had such a fright! I saw such a fierce fellow! He had a large head, terrible horns and a rough voice! He said his name was Ram.

Jackal: How foolish you are! Ram cannot hurt a flea, and his meat is juicy and sweet. I thought you were a great hunter. Tomorrow we will go and eat him.

Narrator 1: Leopard was still afraid, but he wanted to seem brave.

Leopard: All right. I'll go.

Narrator 2: The next day, Jackal tied Leopard to his leg with a string.

Jackal: This way, you cannot run away if you get scared.

Narrator 1: Mr. Ram saw the two friends as they came to the top of the hill.

Narrator 2: Mr. Ram ran into his house.

Mr. Ram: Wife, what shall we do? Jackal and Leopard are trying to hunt us!

Mrs. Ram: Have no fear. Take our child in your arms and go outside. Pinch her to make her cry as if she were hungry.

Narrator 1: Mr. Ram took the baby and did as he was told. He stepped outside just as Leopard and Jackal arrived.

Narrator 2: As soon as Leopard saw Mr. Ram, he grew afraid. He tried to pull away, but Jackal jerked the string.

Jackal: Come on. A ram cannot hurt you.

Narrator 1: Mr. Ram saw Leopard's fear, and he pinched his child.

Narrator 2: The child began to cry.

Mr. Ram: Jackal, you have done well.

You have brought us the leopard to eat. You are just in time. My child is crying for food.

Narrator 1:   These words were more than Leopard could stand. He leaped away and began to run, dragging Jackal with him.

Narrator 2:   Leopard ran up and down hills, through bushes, and under rocks. He did not look back until poor Jackal was bruised from head to toe.

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