

THE IMPACT OF EXPOSURE AND EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION ON SECOND
GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION AND RECALL OF INFORMATIONAL
TEXTS

By

TIFFANY OHLSON

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2011

© 2011 Tiffany Ohlson

To my family

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to begin by expressing my deepest appreciation to all the members of my committee: Dr. Zhihui Fang, Dr. Christie Cavanaugh, Dr. David Miller, and Dr. Elizabeth Bondy. Each of you played a significant role in my growth and development as an educator. I thank you for your leadership, support and knowledge. I would especially like to acknowledge my chair Dr. Zhihui Fang who has provided guidance and motivation for me throughout my doctoral studies at the University of Florida.

To the teachers that have touched my heart and ignited my passion for teaching and learning, I am eternally grateful. I would like to especially thank the educators at the Patrick Lyndon School in West Roxbury for providing me with educational experiences and insights that have shaped my understanding about the education of children.

I would like to thank my parents for their unwavering support and faith throughout this journey. They, along with my siblings and friends, have provided me with much needed companionship, support, and motivation.

Finally, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my husband and children, who are my daily inspiration. Thank you Gabe, Brady, and Nate for helping me to keep things in perspective and providing me with unconditional love and support. And to my husband and best friend, Matt, I am eternally grateful for your faith, love, and guidance. I am blessed to have you as my partner, and I can't wait to see where this journey takes us.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	4
LIST OF TABLES.....	8
LIST OF FIGURES.....	9
ABSTRACT	10
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	12
Background.....	12
Research Problem	14
The Informational Genre	15
Significance	16
Research Questions	20
Study Delimitations.....	22
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	23
Stages of Reading Development	24
Importance of Reading Aloud	26
Scarcity of Informational Texts.....	27
Genre.....	30
Recount.....	31
Narrative.....	32
Procedure.....	33
Report.....	34
Description	35
What is Needed to Comprehend Informational Texts?	35
Domain Knowledge	37
Vocabulary Knowledge.....	38
Text Structure.....	40
Motivation and Engagement.....	42
Young Children and Genre Development.....	43
The Role of Exposure in Genre Development.....	44
The Role of Explicit Instruction in Genre Development	46
Summary	48
3 RESEARCH METHODS.....	50
Design.....	50
Participants	50

Measures	52
Materials and Instruction.....	53
Materials.....	53
Instructional Framework	53
Instructional Sequence and Implementation Time.....	54
Instruction in Exposure Group.....	55
Instruction in Control Group.....	55
Procedures	55
Data Analysis.....	58
Reading Comprehension Analysis	58
Analysis of Retellings	58
Descriptive Linguistic Analysis	58
Holistic Analysis	59
4 RESULTS	63
Introduction	63
Impact of Instructional Interventions on Reading Comprehension.....	63
Impact of Instructional Interventions on Recall	64
Descriptive Linguistic Analysis.....	64
Organizational Structure.....	65
Generic Participants	67
Present Tense Verbs.....	68
Technical Vocabulary	68
Holistic Analysis	69
5 DISCUSSION	78
Implications for Practice.....	81
Limitations of the Study.....	83
Implications for Future Research	84
APPENDIX	
A INFORMED CONSENT LETTER	87
B PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	90
C IMPLEMENTATION OBSERVATION FORM.....	93
D RICHNESS OF RETELLING SCALE.....	94
E TEACHER SURVEY	95
F COMPREHENSION MEASURES.....	105

REFERENCES..... 118
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH..... 126

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>page</u>
2-1 School based genre features.....	36
3-1 Research design.....	61
3-2 Example of the instructional framework.....	61
3-3 Instructional sequence.....	62
4-1 Reading comprehension pretest and posttest scores by group.....	76
4-2 Percentage changes for comprehension pre- to posttest.....	76
4-3 Means and standard deviations for the linguistic analyses.....	76
4-4 Percentage changes for linguistic features from pre- to posttest.....	76
4-5 Holistic retelling scores by group.....	77
4-6 Means and standard deviations for holistic retelling scores.....	77
A-1 Features of narrative and informational texts.....	90
A-2 Four attributes of explicit text.....	91
A-3 Explicit instruction.....	93

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>		<u>page</u>
4-1	Mean scores for reading comprehension pre- and posttest by group.....	71
4-2	Percentage change in usage of present tense verbs from pre- to posttest.....	72
4-3	Percentage change in usage of generic nouns from pre- to posttest.....	73
4-4	Percentage change in usage of technical vocabulary from pre- to posttest.....	74
4-5	Percentage change in organizational structure from pre- to posttest.....	75

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

THE IMPACT OF EXPOSURE AND EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION ON SECOND
GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION AND RECALL OF INFORMATIONAL
TEXTS

By
Tiffany Ohlson

December 2011

Chair: Zhihui Fang
Major: Curriculum and Instruction

The importance and inclusion of informational texts in primary-grade classrooms has been discussed at length in recent years. Few opportunities for primary-aged children to engage in activities or instruction concerning informational texts are provided. This lack of early exposure to informational texts may explain why many young children have difficulty reading and understanding this text type in subsequent years.

The goal of this study was to implement informational read alouds with and without explicit instruction in informational genre features and evaluate their impact on children's comprehension and recall. The study used a quasi-experimental, split-plot design with one between-groups factor, condition (exposure plus instruction, exposure, and comparison) and one within-groups factor, time of measurement (pretest and posttest) to examine the children's comprehension. Linguistic analyses were also employed to examine the children's recall of the informational texts. Participants were teachers and second grade children drawn from one area public school. Quantitative data analysis revealed no statistically significant differences in mean comprehension scores between the groups. However, the linguistic analyses showed

evidence of learning gains for specific genre features associated with informational texts.

The findings offer valuable insight into young children's genre development as it relates to explicit instruction and exposure to informational texts. The children's increasing knowledge of specific informational genre features indicates that the inclusion of such texts at the primary level may be recommended.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Background

The ability to read and write informational texts is of undeniable importance as informational literacy leads to success in school and beyond. A principal goal of the U.S. educational system is to provide effective literacy instruction in order to cultivate an informational literate society. Although the importance of informational literacy is clear, students in the U.S. are still not developing critical early reading and writing skills. According to a recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), about one-third of American fourth graders are reading proficiently at their grade level, another third only has partial mastery of the knowledge and skills appropriate for reading at the fourth-grade level, and the bottom third fails to even reach that low level of performance (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Additionally, fourth grade students' average informational reading comprehension continues to be lower than both their overall comprehension and their narrative text comprehension (Schugar, 2008).

These deficiencies in literacy achievement occur as students are transitioning from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” and have been referred to as the “fourth-grade slump” (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990). One possible contributor to this difficulty is children’s lack of exposure to and instruction in informational texts in the early grades.

The importance and inclusion of informational texts in primary-grade classrooms have been discussed at length in recent years (Donovan & Smolkin, 2001; Moss, 2005; Palincsar & Duke, 2004). Unfortunately, current research has shown that teachers provide few opportunities for primary-aged children to engage in activities or instruction

concerning informational texts (Duke, 2000; Fang, 2002; Moss & Newton, 2002). This lack of early exposure and instruction using informational texts may explain why many young children have difficulty with informational reading and writing in subsequent years.

Duke (2000) conducted a study highlighting this lack of exposure and instruction with informational text in the primary grades. She found that informational text accounted for a mean of only 2.6% of displayed print and 9.8% of classroom library materials in the 20 first-grade classrooms she observed. Additionally, Duke witnessed an average of a mere 3.6 minutes per day spent on activities involving informational text, with the average being even lower (1.4 minutes per day) in classrooms from low-SES districts.

Surveys of teacher practices have also demonstrated the lack of exposure to informational texts in the elementary grades. Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi (1996) conducted a national survey of kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade teachers identified by reading supervisors as effective in promoting literacy in their classrooms. This survey found that only 6% of the literacy materials used by these teachers was expository in nature. Another national survey of kindergarten through sixth-grade teachers revealed that informational texts ranked extremely low in regards to their use during read alouds across all grade levels (Jacob, Morrison, & Swinyard, 2000). Yet another study of primary-grade teachers found that few teachers use informational texts as read alouds, with only 14% of reported read aloud texts categorized as nonfiction (Yopp & Yopp, 1999).

The benefits of reading aloud have been well documented through research in the field of reading instruction. Some benefits of reading aloud include building background knowledge, developing vocabulary, increasing students' motivation to read, teaching text structure, and exposing students to texts that may be too difficult for them to decode on their own but which they can comprehend when listening (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). Conducting read alouds using informational texts compensates for children's reading abilities and still exposes them to the genre. In addition to the exposure to informational texts, instruction in genre-specific text features can be incorporated into informational read alouds in the primary grades (Purcell-Gates, Duke & Martineau, 2007; Smolkin & Donovan, 2001). It has been argued that such instruction can accelerate children's learning of school-based genres (Derewianka, 1990; Fang, 2003; Martin, 1989).

Research Problem

The research on the scarcity of informational texts in primary-grade classrooms is alarming because of the important role these texts have in the education of young children. Informational texts build background knowledge, which is vital to comprehending text (Hirsch, 2003). They expose children to technical vocabulary necessary to understand and discuss the content they are learning (Fang, 2008; Reese & Harris, 1997). Early exposure to and instruction in informational texts prepare children for future engagement with content area texts, which will account for the majority of their reading and writing as adults (Ogle & Blachowicz, 2002). Furthermore, many children find informational texts more engaging and motivating than narratives (Caswell & Duke, 1998; Mohr, 2006; Pappas, 1993).

Whereas some genres will be familiar to children regardless of their background, informational texts may be so unfamiliar and so rarely encountered outside of the classroom that unless explicitly introduced, they will never be mastered (Wollman-Bonilla, 2000). Many teachers are using literature-based literacy programs in primary classrooms, and too frequently the range of literature provided is narrow, made up mainly of narrative texts (Duke, 2000; Fang, 2002; Moss, 2005; Pappas, 1993). If it is true that young children learn about the nature of written language by being read to, by hearing written language read aloud (Holdaway, 1979; Teale, 1984; Wells, 1985, 1986), and the nature of the majority of texts being read aloud in primary classrooms is narrative, then teachers are not adequately preparing students to successfully engage with informational texts. Unfortunately, the *Great Divide* (Newkirk, 1989) or the *expository gap* (Daniels, 1990), which refers to the lack of children's capabilities to use informational written language, is actually being fostered due to the text selections of many primary teachers. Effective use of informational texts in primary classrooms may aid in preparing students to successfully comprehend and compose this genre in later schooling.

The Informational Genre

Genre is a term used to refer to particular text or discourse types. Each genre serves a particular purpose and has distinctive structural and linguistic features (Derewianka, 1990; Martin, 1989). This study focuses on the factual genre of report. At the elementary level, reports are generally incorporated into science instruction due to the nature of their content.

A report makes general statements about a class of things with the purpose of informing the reader; therefore, for the purpose of this research, the terms *report* and

informational text will be used interchangeably. The text structure of reports, or informational texts, usually begin with a general classification or phenomenon followed by successive elements that contribute to a description or listing of its properties, such as types, parts and their functions, qualities, uses or habits and so on. Some defining text features of science reports include generic participants, timeless verb constructions, technical or specialized vocabulary, realistic illustrations or photographs, and captions or labels (Derewianka, 1990; Schleppegrell, 2004). These science reports use language that is technical, dense, and abstract (Fang, 2008; Halliday & Martin, 1993).

The text structure and defining text features of science reports differ greatly from the language and composition of narrative texts (Fang, 2008, 2010). Narrative text structure generally refers to the story grammar, which includes a sequence of events involving specific participants and their actions and feelings. The setting, characters, problem, solution, and conclusion form a predictable structure that most narrative texts follow. Narratives include more common everyday language as well. With a predictable text structure, language that is easier to comprehend, and more exposure, it is clear to see why young children have more success comprehending narratives in comparison with informational texts.

Significance

There is a limited research base supporting the use of informational texts to enhance young children's genre development (Duke & Kays, 1998; Pappas, 1993). Much of the research examining the role of informational texts on young children's genre development has focused on increased exposure to the genre. Pappas (1993) found that kindergarten students developed an awareness of genre-specific text features associated with informational texts after increased exposure to the genre. The

children incorporated informational text features when performing pretend readings of informational texts after exposure to the genre through read alouds. Similarly, Duke and Kays (1998) examined Kindergarten students' knowledge of informational texts before and after extensive exposure to the genre. Children's pretend readings of informational texts demonstrated a greater understanding of the linguistic features generally found in informational texts after three months of increased exposure to the genre through read alouds.

Although calls from researchers have been issued to increase exposure to informational texts, few studies address the role of explicit instruction of genre-specific text features in the early grades. This may be due to the fact that the role of explicit instruction in children's genre development has been a topic of theoretical debate among researchers. Research stemming from the Australian genre movement has focused on empowering children through instruction in academic genres. They suggest that knowledge about how and when to use specific genres enhances children's abilities to communicate effectively and participate in academic disciplines (Christie, 1989; Martin, 1989; Rothery 1996). Australian researchers argue that elementary school children are not familiar with many academic genres and criticize the nondirective manner of teaching made popular by the whole language movement (Christie, 1989). On the other hand, some researchers argue that explicit instruction of genre features is unnecessary and ineffective (Freedman, 1993; Freedman & Medway, 1994). These researchers contend that genre is learned intuitively through context, similar to the way in which a second-language is likely acquired.

Although some researchers contend that instruction in academic genres is too complex for young children, others have demonstrated that children as young as Kindergarten can learn linguistic features associated with various academic genres (Duke & Kays, 1998; Pappas, 1993). Questions still exist about how young children develop knowledge of a particular genre and how this development is best facilitated. Little empirical evidence is available and theoretical debates continue regarding the role of instruction in genre development. This study seeks to augment the empirical evidence examining the role explicit instruction plays on young children's genre development.

Despite the primary focus on increased exposure to informational texts, one recent study did examine the impact of explicit instruction using the informational genre at the primary level. Purcell-Gates, Duke, and Martineau (2007) conducted a two-year study examining the role of authentic literacy experience and explicit instruction in genre-specific features of informational texts on second and third graders' growth in their ability to read and write these texts. The authentic activities and explicit teaching of genre features were embedded into the classes' science instruction twice a week with no specific changes to their science curriculum. They designed assessments to measure the students' ability to comprehend informational texts which would be suitable for growth modeling across the two years. Surprisingly, their findings showed little effect of explicit teaching of informational text features on students' growth in their abilities to read and write this specific genre.

More research is needed to understand how informational texts are best learned. Is exposure to the genre enough for young children to successfully comprehend

informational text or would explicit instruction in genre-specific text features be beneficial for these children when reading and comprehending informational text?

The present study is significant in that it seeks to expand this research base by examining the impact of informational read alouds and instruction in genre-specific text features on the reading comprehension of young children. Much of the research on this topic has addressed the effects of increased exposure to the genre resulting in positive effects on comprehension. More research on the inclusion of explicit instruction in genre-specific text features with young children is necessary to understand the role it plays in genre development. This study seeks to address how exposure and instruction using informational texts impacts young children's comprehension of this genre.

The present study examines the impact of explicit instruction of informational texts at the primary level; however, instead of comparing the explicit instruction to authentic literacy experiences as in the study conducted by Purcell-Gates, Duke, and Martineau (2007), this study investigates the role of exposure to informational text versus the role of explicit instruction with this specific genre. The increased exposure and explicit instruction in genre-specific text features was conducted through read alouds performed four times a week over the course of nine weeks, instead of twice a week over the course of two years. These sessions were more consistent and concentrated. Additionally, Purcell-Gates, Duke & Martineau (2007) examined the impact of explicit instruction on students' reading comprehension alone, while this research seeks to explore the impact on students' reading comprehension *and* recall of informational text. This research examines the influence of explicit instruction of genre-specific text features by exploring questions that previous research has not addressed.

This study is grounded in the theory that children learn about print through their experiences with it (Clay, 1991; Purcell-Gates, 1995). Children construct understandings about written language such as its purpose, structure, and meaning through culturally-composed and socially-motivated experiences (Halliday, 1975). Many of these experiences occur in school where children are provided opportunities to interact with various genres. According to this theory, in order to understand children's genre development and how it might best be facilitated, one must understand the genre experiences children have and the understandings that they construct from them. In this study, children's genre experiences are defined as listening to read alouds of informational texts and reading informational texts independently. The understandings that the children construct from these experiences with informational texts are quantified by reading comprehension scores and linguistic analyses of their retellings.

This research is also significant because it will enhance early elementary teachers' knowledge of best practices in reading instruction. This research addresses whether taking that extra time for explicit instruction in genre-specific text features makes a significant difference compared to simply exposing students to informational texts through read alouds in the primary grades. This research aims to enhance teachers' knowledge and planning for how to best aid their students' comprehension of informational texts.

Research Questions

Current reading research documents the scarcity of informational texts present in primary classrooms (Duke, 2000; Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi, 1996) and the limited amount of instruction using informational texts (Fang, 2002; Jacob, Morrison, & Swinyard, 2000; Yopp & Yopp, 1999). This study examines the impact of exposure and

explicit instruction of genre-specific text features on young children's reading comprehension and recall of informational texts. It was designed to address the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of exposure versus exposure plus explicit instruction on second graders' comprehension of informational texts?
2. What is the impact of exposure versus exposure plus explicit instruction on second graders' recall of informational texts?

The goal of this study is to implement informational read alouds with and without explicit instruction in informational genre features and evaluate their impact on children's comprehension. There is a three group comparison with one group receiving no informational text intervention, a second group receiving only exposure to informational texts and a third group receiving both exposure and instruction in informational texts. Participants are second grade children drawn from one public school in Florida. The teacher in the exposure plus instruction group agreed to: attend training sessions prior to the start of the implementation of the instructional intervention, perform informational read alouds with the texts provided four times a week for the nine week duration of the intervention, and allow the researcher into his classroom during the read alouds on a weekly basis for fidelity checks. The training session was designed to aid the teacher in understanding the genre-specific text features and explicit teaching addressed in the study. The training included practice in examining texts in terms of their genre-specific text features, observing a model lesson performed by the researcher including explicit teaching of the text feature, and developing his own lesson including explicit teaching of genre-specific text features. Ongoing coaching was available to the teacher in the instructional intervention group for the duration of the study. Meanwhile, the teacher in the exposure group read sixteen informational science

texts to their students for the nine-week duration of the study. The teachers were asked to conduct their typical literacy instruction with no changes other than reading the informational texts; therefore, no explicit teaching of genre-specific text features occurred in conjunction with the read alouds. The third group was a control group and was asked to conduct their typical literacy instruction with no changes.

Study Delimitations

There are certain delimitations relating to the generalizability of this research to settings and participants beyond those that will be studied. One such delimitation is that this research includes a relatively small sample size of three second-grade classrooms, one classroom for each condition. It will be up to readers of this research to determine whether the findings can be generalized to other participants. Additionally, the setting is particular to this research study, so readers will have to decide if appropriate comparisons can be drawn between additional settings.

Another delimitation of this study is that this research is primarily directed towards practicing teachers. Although the findings refer to practicing teachers, prospective teachers in teacher preparation programs may also find this information useful. The results of this study could inform teacher educators in how to train beginning teachers to effectively integrate informational texts into their reading instruction.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of informational read alouds and instruction in genre-specific text features on children's reading comprehension and recall of informational texts. Recent scholarship has called for providing students with more opportunities to engage with informational texts in primary classrooms (Christie, 1987; Duke, 2000; Lemke, 1994; Pappas, 1991) in response to concerns about students' poor informational literacy skills. Chapter 2 presents relevant research related to young children's experience with informational texts and their informational genre development.

The first topic addressed is the difficulty many students have with transitioning from "learning to read" in the primary grades to "reading to learn" in the intermediate grades, which has been referred to as the "fourth-grade slump" (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990). The stages of reading development documented by the prominent reading researcher, Jeanne Chall, are summarized along with her groundbreaking findings leading to the concern about students' poor informational literacy skills.

The well-documented advantages of reading aloud to young children are delineated in the next section. Reading aloud to young children facilitates literacy development in a number of ways including increasing students' vocabulary and comprehension, while also introducing students to advanced language patterns and complex concepts.

The research demonstrating the paucity of informational texts used in primary grades is addressed in the following section. It is critical to understand the extent to which young children are not exposed to informational texts in the early grades. This

scarcity of informational texts in primary classrooms provides a foundation for the purpose of this research.

Since this study is concerned with informational genre knowledge and development, brief definitions and descriptions of commonly found genres in elementary grades are discussed along with a review of the research on young children's informational genre development.

This is followed by a review of the research on the benefits of children's experience with informational texts, which has mainly come from teacher read alouds. Finally, the review will conclude with a discussion of the role of explicit instruction of genre-specific text features in young children's informational genre development.

Stages of Reading Development

Over the past four decades results from reading tests administered by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have demonstrated what Jeanne Chall referred to as the "fourth-grade slump." This term refers to the drop in reading scores of students after transitioning from "learning to read" to "reading to learn," which generally occurs between third and fourth grade. Chall's (1983, 1996) developmental model of reading describes stages in the process of becoming a proficient, skilled reader and outlines the progression from "learning to read" to "reading to learn".

There are six stages in Chall's developmental model of reading, beginning at Stage 0 (prereading) and continuing through Stage 5 when skilled readers construct knowledge through synthesis and analysis of text. The first stage, Stage 0, primarily focuses on children's oral language development up until age 5 or 6, when they begin formal schooling. Children in this stage retell texts through pictures, pretend read, and have some knowledge of alphabet letters. Throughout Stages 1 and 2 children develop

a sense of the alphabetic principle, learn to decode simple texts, and become more fluent readers. Instruction during these stages focuses on direct instruction in decoding skills and opportunities for children to read familiar and interesting texts at their instructional and independent levels. Teachers should also read higher-level texts aloud to children in order to aid in their development of more advanced language patterns, vocabulary acquisition, and knowledge of new ideas and concepts. Generally, Stages 1 and 2 are considered the time that students “learn to read.” Children usually progress through these stages while in first, second and third grade.

Stage 3, typically occurring in grades 4-8, is characterized by increasingly more difficult texts and contexts, which put greater cognitive demands on the reader. This marks the shift from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Beginning in Stage 3 and continuing through Stage 5, students consistently use texts as tools for learning. Texts contain more varied and complex vocabulary, text structures, and ideas in order to expand students’ knowledge of the world. Stages 4 and 5 continue through high school and college when students must read, analyze and synthesize information from numerous texts and viewpoints. Students are asked to critically read and analyze texts, while expanding and constructing their own understanding. Students must increase their vocabularies and knowledge in order to be able to comprehend these more challenging texts.

Many children find the transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” difficult, which limits their academic success. Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) performed a study examining the reading skills and abilities of 30 second, fourth and sixth graders over a two-year period, paying close attention to students from low-income

families. Their results showed that students' scores decreased between third and fourth grade. This phenomenon was referred to as the "fourth-grade slump." The sharpest decrease was found in word meanings, with low-income children having more difficulty with abstract, academic vocabulary than the other children. Although their vocabulary knowledge seemed to be sufficient in the primary grades, they were ill equipped to handle the more challenging texts containing increased amounts of abstract, specialized vocabulary typically found in texts beyond third grade. One possible reason for the "fourth-grade slump" may stem from a lack of exposure at the primary level to informational texts, which contain a high percentage of academic, technical vocabulary. If students are exposed to more informational texts in early grades, they may be better equipped to read and comprehend these texts when they encounter them beyond third grade.

Importance of Reading Aloud

One way in which young children can be exposed to more sophisticated language patterns, vocabulary and content of informational texts is through read alouds. The act of reading aloud has been described as "the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading" (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985, p.23). Ample research provides support for reading aloud as a critical aspect associated with students' literacy development. Chall (1996) recommends read alouds as part of reading instruction in all stages of reading development in order to facilitate the development of advanced language patterns, vocabulary acquisition and knowledge of complex concepts. Vocabulary acquisition through read alouds has been a topic addressed by many researchers. Studies have demonstrated a clear increase in vocabulary after being exposed to new vocabulary

during classroom read alouds (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Brabham & Lynch-Brown, 2002; Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Senechal & Cornell, 1993). Reading aloud to children has also shown to increase their comprehension (Hickman, Pollard-Durodola, & Vaughn, 2004; Teale, 1986). Reading aloud also gives students a model for fluent reading, introduces students to concepts of print and shows children the value and enjoyment that can come from reading. For many of these reasons, reading aloud was noted as a characteristic of exemplary literacy instruction by researchers examining outstanding primary teachers in the field of literacy (Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 2005).

To summarize, reading aloud to children gives students access to concepts, vocabulary, and content that they may not be able to derive from reading on their own. Reading aloud also mitigates the cognitive load on students since decoding the text is no longer a factor when trying to construct the text's meaning. For these reasons, read alouds would seem to be an optimal way in which to infuse informational texts into early reading instruction.

Scarcity of Informational Texts

Unfortunately, substantial research has suggested a lack of exposure to informational texts in primary classrooms (Duke, 2000; Fang, 2002; Fisher & Hiebert, 1990; Jacob, Morrison, & Swinyard, 2000; Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi, 1996; Yopp & Yopp, 1999, 2006). This lack of exposure to informational texts has permeated primary classrooms. Research has found few informational texts available in classroom libraries, used during read alouds, and present in basal reader series.

Duke (2000) conducted a study highlighting this lack of exposure to informational text in the primary grades. The study provided descriptive information about experiences with informational texts offered to students in 20 first-grade classrooms

from both high- and low-SES school districts. Each classroom was visited for four days over the course of a school year, and data were collected about the types of text on classroom walls, in the classroom library, and in classroom written language activities. Results showed that informational text accounted for a mean of only 2.6% of displayed print and 9.8% of classroom library materials in the 20 first-grade classrooms she observed. Additionally, Duke witnessed an average of a mere 3.6 minutes per day spent on activities involving informational text, with the average being even lower (1.9 minutes per day) in classrooms from low-SES districts.

Surveys of teacher practices have also demonstrated the lack of exposure to informational texts in the elementary grades. Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi (1996) conducted a national survey of kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade teachers identified by reading supervisors as effective in promoting literacy in their classrooms. This survey found that only 6% of the literacy materials used by these teachers was expository in nature. Another national survey of kindergarten through sixth-grade teachers revealed that informational texts ranked extremely low in regards to their use during read alouds across all grade levels (Jacob, Morrison, & Swinyard, 2000). Yet another study of primary-grade teachers found that few teachers use informational texts as read alouds, with only 14% of reported read aloud texts categorized as nonfiction (Yopp & Yopp, 1999).

Yopp and Yopp (2006) analyzed texts used during read alouds both at home and at school. They examined 1,487 texts reportedly read aloud by primary teachers (preschool – third grade) and found that only 8% were categorized as informational, while 7% of the 1,473 titles read aloud by parents of Kindergarteners were categorized

as informational. These findings show that children have limited exposure to informational texts both at home and at school.

In addition to the well-documented scarcity of informational texts at the elementary level, researchers have begun to examine the lack of exposure to informational texts during preschool years as well. Pentimonti, Zucker, & Justice (in press) studied the read-alouds of 13 teachers, resulting in 433 texts and found that only 5% were informational. Pentimonti, Zucker, Justice, & Kaderavek (2010) examined 733 texts used as read alouds in preschool classrooms and found that 82% were narrative, 13% were mixed genres, and a mere 4% were categorized as informational. These studies demonstrate the pervasive lack of informational texts in the early grades.

In addition to the lack of informational texts used as read alouds in primary classrooms, research has been conducted on the inclusion of this genre in basal reader series commonly used in elementary classrooms across the U.S. In 1986, Flood and Lapp found that narrative selections accounted for more than 66% of the total pages in eight basal reader series spanning grades one through six. In 1994, Hoffman et al. found that only 12% of both the 1986/87 and 1993 editions of five publishers' first-grade basal readers consisted of non-narrative text. More recently, Moss & Newton (2002) examined the inclusion of informational text included in basal reading series in grades two, four, and six. Their findings confirmed those of earlier studies, with informational text selections accounting for 18% of the selections and 20% of the pages overall. Since basal reading series are used in 95% of American classrooms (Moss & Newton, 2002), this lack of informational text is widespread in elementary classrooms across the country.

Another possible factor affecting the number of informational texts used in primary classrooms is associated with the teachers' own comfort level with the genre. Researchers have suggested that many elementary teachers have negative associations with reading informational texts (Donovan & Smolkin, 2002). Because many adults struggle with reading and comprehending informational texts, possibly from limited exposure and instruction using these texts during their own schooling, teachers may not feel comfortable reading these types of texts with their students (Donovan & Smolkin, 2002). Elementary teachers may choose to read narrative texts that contain information or mixed genres more often than reading informational texts due to their own personal preference and comfort level (Donovan & Smolkin, 2001).

Despite the scarcity of informational texts found in primary classrooms, approximately 75% of the texts that children read in school by the time they reach sixth grade are classified as informational (Venezky, 2000). Additionally, researchers report that a large percentage of passages used to measure reading comprehension on standardized tests are informational (Calkins, Montgomery, Santman, & Falk, 1998; Ruetschlin, Dreher, & Finger, 2005). Given the predominance of informational texts (e.g., textbooks, trade books) in later schooling, familiarity with this genre is imperative.

Genre

Reading is a complex task in which the reader must coordinate many cognitive processes in order to recognize words, construct meaning from text, and retain the information read in memory. This task becomes even more complicated when different genres are included. Up to this point, much of the research has divided texts into one of two categories: narrative or expository. In reality, there are many different text types, or

genres, that fall under the category “expository,” including reports, procedures, and expositions.

Genre is a term used to refer to particular text or discourse types. Genres vary in organizational structure and each serves a specific social purpose, e.g., to explain, to inform, to describe, or to argue. Each genre has its own particular set of linguistic features, which are functional in realizing the purpose and meanings of that genre.

Martin (1998) proposes the use of three categories to summarize the purposes of typical school-based genres: Personal, Factual, and Analytical. Personal Genres retell or create personal experiences and include recounts and narratives. Factual Genres present factual information and include procedures, reports, and descriptions. Analytical Genres explain phenomenon or present an argument and include accounts, explanations, and expositions. The Personal and Factual Genres are the most commonly found genres in primary grades (K-3), so for the purpose of this research, the following section will provide an overview of the Personal and Factual Genres: recount, narrative, procedure, description, and report.

Recount

Recounts recreate personal experiences usually through retelling a sequence of events. They are characterized by their use of specific language features including specific participants (i.e. Mrs. Harner, my dog, I) consisting of many personal pronouns. Another text feature of recounts is the extensive use of action verbs in the simple past tense such as *smiled*, *barked*, and *ran*. The use of temporal markers to organize the sequence of events is also characteristic of recounts (i.e. *next*, *later*, *before*, *on Monday*). The following is an example of a recount written by a first grade student:

Today I played basketball. We dribbled across the court and we passed it to each other. I learned how to steal the ball. Miguel was on my team and Nate, Ben and Antonio were on the other team. We won eight to six.

Christie (1998) proposes a developmental continuum of students' writing in which students typically begin with writing recounts in the early elementary grades. As the recounts become more sophisticated, students become better prepared to create narratives.

Narrative

Narratives serve to entertain and typically have a familiar structure often referred to as story grammar, which is organized around the goals and needs of specific participants. Narratives typically follow a temporal sequence beginning with an orientation, which introduces the reader to the main characters and setting of the story. A series of events follow the orientation during which a problem or complication usually arises. Finally, a resolution of the complication is realized at the conclusion of the story. Narratives are the principal text type read and discussed in primary classrooms; therefore, children are able to rely heavily on their familiarity with this text structure when asked to comprehend stories. Additionally the content of narrative texts is familiar to readers since they usually focus on topics in which readers have a wealth of knowledge such as social relationships and everyday situations. This familiar causal structure and text content aid in the comprehension and memory of stories.

Narratives are usually written in the past tense and include many transitional words to mark the sequence of events. They contain a large number of action verbs, but also include verbs which refer to the feelings and thoughts of the specific participants. Dialogue and descriptive language is often included to develop the story

as well. An excerpt from *The Grouchy Ladybug* by Eric Carle is an example of a narrative:

It was night and some fireflies danced around the moon. At five o'clock in the morning the sun came up. A friendly ladybug flew in from the left. It saw a leaf with many aphids on it and decided to have them for breakfast. But just then a grouchy ladybug flew in from the right. It too saw the aphids and wanted them for breakfast.

Procedure

Schleppegrell (2004) defines procedure as a genre which directs the actions of others through a sequence of steps. The organizational structure of procedural texts consists of this set of steps, which tell the reader how to do something such as perform an experiment. Procedures generally use a declarative mood employing imperative verbs in the present tense in order to give directions or instructions. Transitional words such as *first*, *next*, and *then* referring to the sequence of steps are also commonly found in procedural texts. The following example of procedural text is extracted from directions on how to grow a plant on the Kids Science Experiments web site, an online site consisting of numerous science experiments designed for children.

1. Take the two flower pots and fill them with the potting soil - leaving about an inch from the top of the pots unfilled.
2. Make a hole in the center of the potting soil with your thumb (this is where you will place the seeds) in both pots.
3. Drop a few seeds in the hole in each pot and cover the hole with the soil. (excerpt from <http://www.kids-science-experiments.com/growaplant.html>)

Martin (1989) suggests that procedures are the most similar type of factual writing to narratives and recounts in the fact that they are all organized around a sequence of events. The difference is manifested in the generality of the participants and events in procedural texts contrasted with the specificity of the participants and events in the Personal Genres of recounts and narratives.

Report

The purpose of the report genre is to relate a set of facts about a topic. Halliday and Martin (1993) identify reports as the most common genre found in science textbooks. The information in reports is organized by classifying, dividing phenomena into parts, or by describing its properties. Reports usually begin with a general statement introducing the topic (e.g. *Mammals are one of the six main classes of animals*) and then continue with more specific information describing characteristics of that topic (i.e. *warm blooded, nurse their young, have hair*). Participants are usually generic in order to refer to classes of things like animals or plants. Another text feature of reports is the inclusion of technical vocabulary, which serves to name content specific phenomena (i.e. mammal, reptile, amphibian). Reports also use timeless verbs in the present tense such as *produces, controls, and functions* to relay information. In addition, relational process clauses are included to describe the relationships and classifications present in reports. These usually consist of *having* or *being* clauses (i.e. *mammals have hair; mammals are warm blooded*). The following is an example of a report on mammals:

Mammals have several unique characteristics that differentiate them from other animals. Most mammals have hair, or fur, covering their body. They are also capable of regulating their body temperature. The mammal's metabolism controls heat production, and the sweat glands help cool the body. These allow the mammal to maintain a constant body temperature, regardless of the environmental temperature. One other difference is that mammals give birth to fully formed babies, and the female mammals produce milk to feed their young.

Most mammals walk on 4 legs, with only the humans walking upright on 2 legs. Aquatic mammals have flippers, or fins, for swimming rather than legs. Common mammals include: primates, such humans and monkeys; marsupials; rodents; whales; dolphins; and, seals. (from <http://www.kidport.com/reflib/science/animals/mammals.htm>)

This study refers to informational texts as reports and uses the terms interchangeably; therefore, the informational texts used in this research will be reports as defined earlier. Reports are used in elementary classrooms primarily during science instruction, with science textbooks containing a large percentage of this genre.

Description

Descriptions describe a person, place or thing. Reports are closely related to the description genre because, like reports, descriptions give readers information. However, instead of focusing on classes of things, descriptions focus on specific individuals or entities (i.e. my dog, the picture on the wall). Students often confuse these two genres when teachers do not point out this fundamental difference between them. Descriptions refer to texts which focus on specific participants and describe their characteristics. The following is an example of a description written by a first grade student:

My dog is big and brown. His name is Barkley. He lives in my house. He plays ball with me. My dog likes to chase squirrels.

This description relays information about a specific dog, whereas a report on dogs would make general statements, having no particular dog in mind. Table 2-1. summarizes the features of each of the school-based genres.

What is Needed to Comprehend Informational Texts?

Reading instruction continues to focus on components considered critical to a child's reading development by the National Reading Panel (NRP): alphabets, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000). Although these components are necessary, they are not sufficient for the successful comprehension of informational text.

Table 2-1. School based genre features

Genres	Social Purpose	Text Structure	Language Features
Procedure	To tell someone how to do or make something	1. Goal 2. Materials 3. Method	* Imperative or declarative sentences * Action verbs * Temporal conjunctions * Simple present tense
Recount	To tell what happened	1. Orientation 2. Series of events	* Specific participants * Action verbs * Past tense * Temporal conjunctions
Narrative	To entertain	1. Orientation 2. Complication 3. Resolution	* Specific participants * Action verbs * Past tense * Temporal conjunctions * Dialogue * Descriptive language
Report	To describe attributes, properties, behaviors, etc. of a class of things	1. General statement 2. Description of various aspects of the thing	* Many linking verbs (e.g., <i>be, have</i>) * Present tense * Some action verbs * Technical vocabulary * General participants * Language for defining, classifying, comparing and contrasting
Description	To describe a specific person, place, or thing	1. Description of various aspects of the specified person, place, or thing	* Specific participants * Some action verbs * Many linking verbs * Present tense

In order to comprehend any text, students must be able to decode at least 90-95% of the words and read fluently with the appropriate rate and intonation. Students are also taught various comprehension strategies in order to aid their comprehension of text. However, other aspects play a key role in students' ability to comprehend informational text including domain knowledge, knowledge of specialized vocabulary,

and text structure. Additionally, many students have shown to be motivated to read informational texts, which can play a part in aiding comprehension.

Domain Knowledge

Comprehension of a text relies on both knowledge-driven and text-driven processing. The knowledge-driven part includes not only knowledge of text structure, but also domain knowledge sometimes referred to as content knowledge. Generally, narrative texts contain more familiar content than expository texts making them easier to comprehend. Since the purpose of expository texts is to communicate information about a topic, usually the readers are reading to gain knowledge they do not already have, forcing them to rely more heavily on what is presented in the text to make connections and comprehend the text (Horiba, 2000; Cote, Goldman, & Saul, 1998). If readers do possess domain knowledge about a text they are reading, they use that prior knowledge along with what they process from the text to create a 'situation model' (Kintsch, 1988). This integration of knowledge gained from the text with prior knowledge creates a situation model that changes as the reader continually adds more information. Without this domain knowledge, readers rely more heavily on text-driven processing using linguistic cues and word recognition to try and comprehend the text, which is generally the case when processing expository texts.

Yet some research indicates that prior knowledge is utilized differently when processing narrative and expository texts. Wolfe (2005) examined the influence of semantic knowledge associations and text organization on memory for narrative and expository text. Prior associations in semantic memory between text concepts and the topic of texts were highly predictive of memory for text content of expository texts; however, the organization of text concepts in the text was a much better predictor of

memory than the semantic associations in narrative texts. Wolfe & Mienko (2007) found that readers' processing of narrative and expository texts differ with respect to integration of prior knowledge with text content. Regarding narrative texts, readers focused their processing on creating a mental representation of events described in the text and were less concerned with integrating the content with their prior knowledge. In contrast, memory was positively correlated with prior knowledge in the expository condition when readers' processing focused on attempts at integrating the content of the texts with their prior knowledge. This line of research indicates that the amount of prior knowledge readers have about a topic could be differentially important considering the genre being read.

If readers attempt to integrate prior knowledge with text content more often while processing expository texts, then the amount of prior knowledge may be more important when reading expository texts than when reading narrative texts (Wolfe & Mienko, 2007). This finding would suggest that students should have a great deal of experience with informational texts in order to gain the knowledge needed to aid text comprehension. Hirsch (2006) asserts that a content-rich literacy curriculum is necessary for building both vocabulary and domain knowledge essential for successful comprehension of text; "reading achievement will not advance significantly until schools recognize and act on the fact that it depends on the possession of a broad but definable range of diverse knowledge. The effective teaching of reading will require schools to teach the diverse, enabling knowledge that reading requires" (p.74).

Vocabulary Knowledge

Research has demonstrated that informational texts contain many specialized vocabulary terms, which can create comprehension difficulties for many students.

Discussions about the specialized terms in informational texts can facilitate further vocabulary acquisition (Reese & Harris, 1997) and provide opportunities for parents, teachers and students to make connections and discuss concepts using more technical, abstract language (Price, van Kleeck, & Huberty, 2009; Smolkin et al., 2008).

Recent research conducted by Price, van Kleeck & Huberty (2009) examined the read aloud experiences of parents and their preschool aged children when sharing expository and narrative texts. The results revealed that discussions about the expository books were significantly longer and contained significantly more feedback and diverse vocabulary than discussions about the narrative texts. Interactions during the expository read alouds also led to an increase in language usage at higher levels of cognitive demand for both the parents and the children in comparison to the interactions during the narrative read alouds.

Additionally, Varelas and Pappas (2006) investigated the effects of read-alouds using informational science texts during an integrated science–literacy unit in first and second grade classrooms. They found that over the course of the study classroom discourse reflected an increased use of scientific language as teachers and students began to use features such as present tense verbs more often in their discussions.

Research conducted by Smolkin and Donovan (2001) examined the interactions between a first-grade teacher and her students while performing informational read alouds. They examined the classroom discourse, specifically looking at the comprehension-related comments (i.e. predictions, elaborations, wonderings) during informational read alouds contrasted with those occurring during narrative read alouds. Results demonstrated that students produced considerably more comprehension-

related comments during the informational read aloud, accounting for 70% of the total discussion, as opposed to the narrative read alouds, which only had 30% of the total discussion coded as comprehension-related. The same trend emerged when the researchers examined the teacher's comments in regards to fostering comprehension during the read alouds, which included categories such as informing, summarizing, fostering predictions, and thinking about text. The teacher produced far more comprehension-related comments during the informational read aloud than during the narrative read aloud (79% vs. 21%). Smolkin and Donovan concluded that the informational texts "were creating a situation in which both children and teacher were more overtly engaged in meaning-seeking, meaning-making efforts" (p. 104).

Text Structure

One area in which there exists a strong research base showing the benefits of explicit instruction using informational texts is in the teaching of text structure. Results show improvement in comprehension and composition of text structures after explicit instruction in those particular structures (Hall, Sabey & McClellan, 2005; Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001; Taylor & Samuels, 1983; Williams, 2005).

In contrast to the predictable causal structure of narratives, the structure of informational texts varies considerably. Informational texts consist of multiple structures including description, causation, problem/solution and compare/contrast (Meyer & Freedle, 1984). They serve to communicate information about a topic and are typically organized through the use of headings and subheadings to help cue the reader into part/whole relationships or characteristics of a class of things being reported. Informational texts are more abstract and include more unfamiliar concepts with less information directly related to personal experiences. They contain more nouns in the

form of nominalizations, more technical vocabulary, and a higher lexical density index than narrative texts, which contain dialogue and use more common everyday language (Derewianka, 1990; Fang, 2008; Schleppegrell, 2004).

Research has shown that knowledge of text structure increases comprehension and memory of text (Goldman & Rakestraw, 2000; Taylor & Samuels, 1983). Narratives are recalled well because readers access their knowledge of the predictable schematic structure in which to organize the text during comprehension (Kintsch & Young, 1984). Research also demonstrates that students are more successful with narrative texts as opposed to expository texts, especially in the elementary grades. Since students in the primary grades spend very little time with expository texts, this seems to be a logical conclusion. Exposure and instruction with various genres, specifically expository genres, have led to increased comprehension, memory and production of those genres (Duke & Kays, 1998; Pappas, 1993; Smolkin & Donovan, 2001). Also, many interventions have been successfully implemented in classrooms in order to improve comprehension and memory of expository text using graphic organizers and aids that specifically highlight text structure (Goldman & Rakestraw, 2000).

A strong research base exists when looking at the effects of teaching text structure. Research has demonstrated that text structure awareness facilitates text comprehension and recall (Meyer & Freedle, 1984; Oakhill & Yuill, 1996; Taylor & Samuels, 1983). Readers who can identify and are knowledgeable about the organizational structures of texts can better recognize important information and relationships between ideas. Intervention studies with older students have shown these benefits of teaching text structure (Englert & Hiebert, 1984; Meyer & Poon, 2001;

Weaver & Kintsch, 1991), while the benefit of teaching text structure to younger children is just now gaining attention (Hall, Sabey, McClellan, 2005; Williams, 2005).

Hall, Sabey & McClellan (2005) investigated the effectiveness of teaching expository text comprehension through text structure awareness to second graders. Second grade students were placed in one of three groups: text structure, content, and no instruction. The text structure group focused on text structure awareness, the content group focused on vocabulary and background knowledge, and the no instruction group carried out their regular instruction. The groups met two or three times per week for 20-25 minutes over a six-week period. Results showed that students who received instruction in text structure were able to use expository text comprehension strategies, gained a conceptual understanding of the text structure, and produced well-structured summaries better than the students in the other two groups. These findings demonstrate considerable benefits of teaching text structure to young students, especially considering the short duration of this intervention.

Motivation and Engagement

Another benefit of exposing young children to informational texts is the argument that these texts play an important role in motivating children to read. Many children find the topics addressed in informational texts interesting and engaging (Caswell & Duke, 1998; Duke, 2000). Informational texts, especially trade books, may be particularly motivating for children because they are visually stimulating and discuss topics that students are curious about (Szymusiak & Sibberson, 2001).

A recent study by Mohr (2006) investigated first grader's choices for recreational reading, specifically looking at their preferences, selection rationales, and processes when choosing a book to own. The first graders demonstrated an overwhelming

preference for nonfiction texts, with, 159 out of the 190 students polled (84%) selecting nonfiction books. The majority of students (57%) cited the topic as the reason for choosing the nonfiction books with another 30% selecting books based on text features such as photographs. These findings show a preference for nonfiction books when young children are given choices for their book selection.

Pappas (1993) also examined children's preferences regarding informational books and narratives. She found that children preferred informational books to narratives on two occasions, with 65% and 79% of Kindergarten students choosing informational texts over narratives.

Research demonstrates the ways in which motivation and the knowledge of specific domains, specialized vocabulary, and text structure can improve students' comprehension of informational text. Experiences with informational texts impact students' learning in regard to their content, specialized vocabulary, and structure with many students actually preferring informational texts to other genres.

Young Children and Genre Development

While there is a general consensus about the benefits of reading informational texts, there is a great deal of uncertainty around the subject of children's genre development. Questions exist about how children develop knowledge of a particular discourse type and how this development is best facilitated. Little empirical evidence is available and theoretical debates continue on the topic of genre development. This study seeks to begin to address the dearth of knowledge about children's genre development and how this development is best facilitated. Despite the lack of research on this topic directly, there is research that addresses children's understanding and experience with informational texts.

The Role of Exposure in Genre Development

Young children's ability to interact with various genres has been a topic of debate, with some scholars asserting that young children may not be able to handle nonnarrative texts. Some believe that young children are unable to learn from or about texts unless they are narratives, or that young children's literacy development is better facilitated through the use of narratives (Egan, 1993; Moffet, 1968). They contend that a child's literacy development begins with a preference for and comprehension of narrative texts, which slowly progresses to other genres.

This idea that narrative is primary in children's literacy development has been called into question. Research has suggested that young children can successfully interact with nonnarrative texts after they are given opportunities to experience various genres. For example, Duke and Kays (1998) examined young children's knowledge of informational texts before and after extensive exposure to the genre in their Kindergarten classes. Children performed pretend readings of an unfamiliar, wordless informational text in September and then again in December. The pretend readings were coded for linguistic features of informational texts including: timeless verbs, generic nouns, relational verbs, technical vocabulary and classificatory structures. Over the course of three months, information books were read aloud to the students 3-4 times per week. There was no instruction in genre-specific text features of information books included during the course of the read alouds. Duke and Kays found that the pretend readings of the Kindergarten children after the three-month intervention demonstrated a greater understanding of the linguistic features typically found in informational texts. The children's pretend readings showed an increase in the use of timeless verbs, generic nouns, classificatory structures, and more characteristic

information book openings. This research demonstrates that young children internalized some of the linguistic features associated with information books during exposure through read alouds and then reproduced them during pretend readings without explicit instruction in those features.

Another study examining Kindergarten students' knowledge of informational texts was conducted by Pappas (1993). Kindergarten children were asked to conduct pretend readings of informational texts and storybooks directly after listening to them read aloud three times over the course of the study. Findings demonstrated that children were just as successful in reenacting the informational books as they were the narratives by including linguistic features respective to the two genres. The children employed increasing amounts of linguistic features of informational texts in their repeated readings from the beginning to the end of the study.

Although results from Duke and Kays (1998) and Pappas (1993) demonstrate young children's genre development in their increased use of linguistic features of informational texts during their pretend readings, there is little evidence that this development would benefit young children's comprehension of the text. However, a qualitative study conducted by Moss (1997) examined first grade students' comprehension of informational text using retellings. Twenty first-grade students were read an informational trade book entitled *How Kittens Grow*. After listening to the book, each child retold the information contained in the text by using a drawing, the text itself, or his/her memory. Each retelling was audiotaped, transcribed, and scored on a scale from 1-5 as indicated by an adapted version of the Irwin & Mitchell (1983) Richness of Retelling Scale. Each retelling was scored three times by three different raters, with 18

of the 20 children scoring a three or better. A level 3 score on the scale refers to a retelling, which accurately and completely recounted the main ideas and details of the text, retold in sequence, and summarized the text. Results from this study suggest that young children are capable of successfully comprehending informational text. Although retellings have been employed as an assessment tool for comprehension of narrative texts, few studies have used retellings to examine children's comprehension of informational text. The findings from this study indicate that retelling could be an appropriate and effective tool for eliciting young children's recall of informational text.

These studies illustrate the ability of young children to successfully interact with informational texts after exposure to this text type during read alouds. Students become aware of the linguistic features associated with informational texts through exposure to the genre, but will this knowledge lead to increased comprehension of the informational genre? This study seeks to expand the limited empirical evidence relating to this question.

The Role of Explicit Instruction in Genre Development

The question of how language is best learned, particularly reading and writing, which are not acquired as one's primary discourse (Gee, 1992) has been debated. Some scholars believe that language is best facilitated through explicit instruction in its various structures, while others believe that language cannot be taught, but must be acquired through experience and immersion in particular language forms. In addition to the two extremes of language learning, there are those scholars who contend that language is best learned through a combination of exposure and instruction.

Researchers from the Australian genre movement argue that explicit instruction in academic genres can empower students to better communicate and participate in

academic disciplines (Christie, 1989; Martin, 1989; Rothery 1996). They criticize the nondirective manner of instruction popularized by the whole language and process movements implying that this is one reason why young children are unfamiliar with many academic genres (Christie, 1989). In an analysis performed by Martin and Rothery of 1500 texts written by elementary students, only 228 (15%) were factual writing (Martin, 1989). Martin (1989) refers to factual writing as the “writing of power” and challenges educators to teach children this writing, so they can understand and challenge the world in which they live.

If children received explicit instruction in writing, for example, including models and direct teaching making use of knowledge about language, many more children would learn to write effectively than at present. And success in education depends on writing. But at present, writing is not taught. Bright middle-class children learn by osmosis what has to be learned. Working-class, migrant, or Aboriginal children, whose homes do not provide them with models of writing, and who don't have the coding orientation to read between the lines and see what is implicitly demanded, do not learn to write effectively... This kind of refusal to teach helps reinforce the success of ruling-class children in education; through an insidious benevolence other children are supportively encouraged to fail. (p.61)

Conversely, some researchers contend that explicit instruction in academic genres is pointless and unproductive (Freedman, 1993; Freedman & Medway, 1994). These researchers suggest that academic genres are learned naturally through continued exposure much like learning a second language. Questions regarding the role of explicit instruction in genre development fuel this ongoing theoretical debate. The present study seeks to address some of these questions by examining the role exposure plays versus the role explicit instruction plays in young children's understanding of informational text.

Although a strong research base exists demonstrating the impact of exposure to informational texts, one recent study conducted by Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau (2007) addresses the lack of genre-specific instruction at the primary level. They conducted a longitudinal study exploring the roles of authentic reading and writing experiences and explicit explanation in genre features on second and third grade students' growth in genre-specific reading and writing abilities. Over two years students received instruction in science consisting of authentic literacy experiences or authentic literacy experiences plus explicit explanation of the typical genre features found in informational and procedural science texts twice per week. Results showed that the effects of authentic literacy activities on performance were strongly correlated with student growth; however, no effect of explicit teaching of genre features on reading and writing growth were evident on the majority of the performance outcomes. These results call into question the idea that genres are best learned through explicit instruction. The researchers discuss the possibility that students in second and third grades may not be developmentally ready for explicit instruction in genre features: "For children as young as seven or eight years, it may be that explicit teaching of linguistic features of specific genres is not congruent with their cognitive and linguistic abilities and thus does not facilitate acquisition of genre knowledge over and above authentic immersion in its use" (p. 42). They conclude that more research is needed to understand the role of explicit instruction in genre-specific learning at the primary level. This study augments the empirical data on this topic.

Summary

Information presented in this review supports the need for teachers to address the scarcity of informational texts present in primary classrooms. The goal of increasing

the amount of experience young children have with informational texts permeates the literature (Duke, 2000; Fang, 2002; Jacob, Morrison, & Swinyard, 2000; Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi, 1996; Yopp & Yopp, 1999, 2006). Although there is evidence suggesting that young children can learn from and about informational texts with increased exposure to them (Duke & Kays, 1998; Pappas, 1993; Smolkin & Donovan, 2001), how such development is best facilitated is still unclear (Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007). My study fills this gap by examining the roles of exposure and explicit instruction on children's comprehension of informational texts with the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of exposure versus exposure plus explicit instruction on second graders' comprehension of informational texts?
2. What is the impact of exposure versus exposure plus explicit instruction on second graders' recall of informational texts?

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODS

The goal of this study was to implement informational read alouds and evaluate their effectiveness when implemented alone and in conjunction with explicit instruction in genre-specific text features. I was interested in exploring how children's ability to comprehend informational texts could best be facilitated.

Design

This study used a quasi-experimental, split-plot design with one between-subjects factor, condition (control vs. exposure vs. exposure plus instruction) and one within-subject factor, time of measurement (pretest vs. posttest). One local public school containing three second-grade classrooms participated in the study. Every condition was present at the school with classrooms being randomly assigned to one of the three conditions, and n representing the total number of students in that condition.

Threats to the internal validity of this quasi-experimental design are important to consider due to the lack of random selection and the use of intact groups for the participant sample. The threats of history and maturation were accounted for by using a comparison group whose participants had a comparable maturation rate and similar characteristics to the participants in the experimental group. Implementing standardized testing procedures and administering alternate forms of the measures alleviated testing and instrumentation threats. Finally, the researcher monitored the mortality rate of participants as it occurred throughout the data collection period.

Participants

Participants were 49 second grade children drawn from one public school in North Central Florida. The sample included 26 boys and 23 girls ranging in age from 7

years to 9 years old. Ninety-four percent of the children were African American, 4 percent were Caucasian and 2 percent were of American Indian descent. Eighty-nine percent of the children were eligible for free- or reduced- lunch.

Three second-grade teachers from the public school were included in the study to deliver the instruction to the participants. The teachers were asked to complete a survey (Appendix E) describing the demographics of their students, their typical daily reading instruction, and their educational background. One teacher was male and the other two teachers were female. Two teachers were Caucasian and one was of African American descent. All of the teachers had their standard certificate in Elementary Education, with one teacher possessing a master's degree in Elementary Education as well. One teacher was a beginning teacher as this was her first year teaching, and the other two teachers had three or more years of experience teaching at the elementary level.

All three teachers used the same reading curriculum, which was the Houghton-Mifflin basal series adopted by the district and spent the same time, 90 minutes, on daily reading instruction. All teachers reported reading aloud daily to their students as part of their reading block. Yet, only one teacher reported reading informational texts during the read alouds, with the other two teachers selecting narratives and poetry as the main genres chosen to read aloud.

Each of the three teachers was assigned to a condition at the beginning of the study. The three conditions were exposure, exposure plus instruction, and the comparison group. The exposure plus instruction (E+I) teacher participating in the study agreed to: attend training sessions prior to the start of the implementation of the

instructional intervention, perform informational read alouds with the texts provided four times a week for the nine-week duration of the intervention, allow the researcher into his classroom during the read alouds on a weekly basis for fidelity checks, and assist the researcher in the collection of student/parent consent forms and other research data. The training sessions were designed to aid the teacher in understanding the genre-specific text features and explicit teaching addressed in the study. The training included practice in examining texts in terms of their text features, observing a model lesson performed by the researcher including explicit teaching of the text feature, and developing his own lesson including explicit teaching of genre-specific text features.

Measures

The study used informational second grade passages published by Teacher Created Resources and the Qualitative Reading Inventory V (QRI-V) as a measure of reading comprehension. The reading comprehension measure was administered at the pretest data collection point approximately one week before implementation of the instructional intervention and at the posttest data collection point one week after the end of the intervention period. The measure was administered to each class by the researcher or classroom teacher. The students were asked to read three short passages and answer the comprehension questions for each passage.

Additionally, students were called into a testing room one by one to read an informational passage from the QRI-V either silently or out loud, whichever they preferred. They were then asked to retell the passage to the best of their ability. The researcher audiotaped these retellings and transcribed them in order to perform linguistic analyses. Students were also asked to answer comprehension questions corresponding to their QRI-V passage, which were recorded by the researcher. These

reading comprehension responses were compiled with the other three comprehension passages for a total of four informational passages used at the pretest and posttest data collection points.

Materials and Instruction

Materials

This study included high-quality informational science texts written for young children. Collaboratively, the researcher and teachers chose informational science texts, which contained the genre-specific text features addressed in the study. The texts were chosen from classroom libraries, county libraries, and science trade books provided by the district.

The genre-specific text features targeted for instruction in this study included: organizational structure consisting of a classification or description of attributes, generic noun constructions, present tense verbs (timeless verb constructions), and specialized vocabulary. These features are commonly found in informational science texts appropriate for second grade (Purcell-Gates & Duke, 2001).

Instructional Framework

The experimental instructional framework combined informational read alouds with explicit instruction in genre-specific text features. The framework is derived from research by Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau (2007) in which they developed ways of explicitly teaching genre-specific text features. The framework includes the following strategies: identifying/defining, modeling, giving examples and nonexamples, and explaining the purpose of each text feature. Each read aloud session ended with a discussion of the text feature addressed.

On the first day of the instructional intervention, the teacher identified and defined the genre of informational text, showed examples and nonexamples (narratives), and explained the purpose of informational text. After the introduction of informational text on the first day, the teacher followed the instructional framework combining explicit instruction in text features and informational science read alouds. The teacher identified the genre-specific text feature he would be addressing by pointing it out in the informational text and defining it. The teacher then gave multiple examples and nonexamples of the text feature throughout the read aloud. For example, the teacher highlighted the use of general noun constructions such as with the word “fish” directly taken from the informational text and contrasted that with a nonexample such as “Nemo.” The teacher also explained the purpose of using the genre feature in informational texts.

After each read-aloud session, the teacher guided a discussion about the genre feature beginning with a think-aloud strategy to narrate his thinking and model how the genre feature could be identified and how it aided in comprehension of the text. During the discussion, the teacher asked questions and gave students multiple opportunities to find examples of the feature in the text. The teacher encouraged all students to contribute to the discussion. He followed this instructional framework for all informational read alouds focusing on each text feature for a two-week period. A one-week review session was included at the end of the intervention.

Instructional Sequence and Implementation Time

The experimental instructional framework was implemented four days a week for a total of nine weeks. Each read-aloud session and accompanying instruction was implemented during a fifteen-minute period. The instructional sequence is outlined in

Table 3-3. Each day students were also given fifteen minutes to read informational texts on their own. This gave students the opportunity to select informational texts that interested them and read them individually or with partners.

Instruction in Exposure Group

The teacher in the exposure group conducted four read aloud sessions per week for the nine-week duration of the study using the informational texts. The teacher conducted her typical literacy instruction with no changes other than reading the selected texts; therefore, no explicit teaching of genre-specific text features occurred in conjunction with the read alouds. Discussion about the content in the informational read alouds did occur following each session. Students in the exposure group also had the opportunity to read informational texts for fifteen minutes either individually or with a partner four days per week. In addition, the exposure group teacher documented her literacy instruction via lesson plans collected by the researcher in order to compare the typical daily reading instruction with the instructional intervention in this study.

Instruction in Control Group

The teacher in the control group conducted her typical literacy instruction with no changes. The control group teacher documented her instruction via lesson plans collected by the researcher in order to compare the typical daily reading instruction with the exposure plus instruction and exposure groups in this study.

Procedures

Upon obtaining consent from teachers, students, and their parents, the students were pretested by the researcher over a one-week period at their school. The QRI-V measure for recall was administered to the children in one-on-one sessions in their school that lasted approximately fifteen minutes each. Additionally, three informational

passages with corresponding comprehension questions were administered to all students in their classrooms. Alternate forms of each measure for students' reading comprehension and retellings were administered at the pretest data collection period. Half of the participating students received Form A and the other half received Form B of the informational passages.

The researcher trained the teacher of the exposure plus instruction group in using the instructional framework. The researcher explained the genre-specific features, explicit teaching strategies, and sequence of the instructional framework. The researcher also modeled an informational read aloud embedding explicit instruction of text features. The training session lasted approximately two hours and the teacher was able to practice the skills and receive feedback from the researcher. At the end of the session, the researcher explained the guidelines for implementing the instructional framework in his classroom and identified the informational science texts to be read. Ongoing coaching was available throughout the duration of the intervention for the teacher in the exposure plus instruction group. The teacher of the exposure only group met in a different session with the researcher and explained the guidelines for reading the informational texts to her students, but she did not receive any training in text features nor explicit teaching strategies.

During the instructional implementation period, the researcher conducted fidelity checks in the exposure plus instruction condition classroom to ensure compliance with the instructional intervention. The researcher visited the classroom weekly to observe the informational read-aloud sessions. The researcher monitored the teacher's instruction to ensure that the instructional sequence was followed and that the explicit

instruction included the features taught in the training sessions. The implementation observation form (Appendix C) uses a rating scale from one to four, with one being poor practice and four being excellent practice, to rate the teacher's implementation of the intervention across four characteristics of explicit instruction. The resulting score can range from four to sixteen.

The teacher in the exposure plus instruction condition maintained fidelity to the explicitness of instruction. His average score on the implementation observation form across the nine weeks was 13.7. In addition, ongoing coaching was given to maintain and/or increase the instruction in text features and explicitness to ensure fidelity to the treatment.

The teacher in the exposure only group read informational texts to her class as well, but did not deliver any accompanying explicit instruction in genre-specific text features. The exposure only group teacher read the texts to her classes over the course of nine weeks at a rate of four read aloud sessions per week. The exposure only group teacher documented her daily reading instruction during the data collection period and the researcher visited the classroom periodically throughout the duration of the study.

The teacher in the control group was not asked to perform any informational read alouds. She performed and documented her regular daily reading instruction during the data collection period and the researcher visited the classroom periodically throughout the study.

Upon completion of the nine-week instructional period, the researcher conducted reading comprehension posttests with the participants. The QRI-V measure for recall

was administered to the children in one-on-one sessions in their school that lasted approximately fifteen minutes each. Additionally, three informational passages with corresponding comprehension questions were administered to all students. Students who received Form A of the reading comprehension measure at the pretest data collection point received Form B at posttest and students who received Form B at pretest were given Form A at posttest.

Data Analysis

Reading Comprehension Analysis

A 3 (condition: exposure plus instruction, exposure, and comparison) X 2 (time of measurement: pretest, posttest) analysis of covariance of the scores for reading comprehension was performed to determine if there were significant differences between each group's posttest performances resulting from the interventions.

Additionally, descriptive statistics including all participants by group on all pretest and posttest measures were completed including the group size (*n*), mean, and standard deviations of the measures administered.

Analysis of Retellings

Students were asked to read an informational passage from the QRI-V and provide an oral retelling at the pretest and posttest data points. The researcher transcribed these retellings and analyzed them in two ways. Retellings were analyzed linguistically and holistically at the pretest and posttest data points.

Descriptive Linguistic Analysis

A descriptive linguistic analysis of students' retellings examined which text features were included in students' retellings and how often they were found from pretest to posttest. As discussed earlier, genre is a term used to refer to particular text

or discourse types, and each genre serves a particular purpose and has distinctive structural and linguistic features (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Lemke, 1990; Swales, 1990). This study focuses on the genre of reports, which usually begin with a general classification followed by successive elements that contribute to a description, such as types, parts and their functions, qualities, uses or habits and so on. The defining text features of reports included in this study are text structure (topic introduction - description of attributes), generic participants, present tense verbs, and technical or specialized vocabulary. Each retelling was coded for inclusion of the following four features: text structure (topic introduction - description of attributes), generic participants, verb tense (simple present), and specialized vocabulary. After coding for inclusion of these four features, percentage scores for three of the features were calculated. This was done by dividing the number of structural elements, the number of generic participants, and the number of verbs in present tense over, respectively, the total number of structural elements (two) typically associated with reports, the total number of participants (specific + general), and the total number of verbs (in all tenses) in the text. Furthermore, the number of technical or specialized terms per retelling was computed. The percentage scores and number of technical terms per retelling were calculated at the pretest and posttest assessment periods.

Holistic Analysis

Each retelling was also assessed and assigned a holistic score based upon an adapted version of Irwin and Mitchell's (1983) 5-point Scale for Judging the Richness of Retellings (Appendix D). This scale evaluates retellings in regards to the student's ability to identify main ideas, relevant details, and text structure, in addition to his/her

ability to summarize, make connections, and infer beyond the text. Each transcribed retelling was assigned a score from 1 being the lowest to 5 being the highest.

Table 3-1. Research design

(a) exposure plus instruction ($n=X$)	O ₁	X ₁	O ₂
(b) exposure ($n=X$)	O ₁	X ₂	O ₂
(c) control ($n=X$)	O ₁		O ₂

O₁ = pretest, O₂ = posttest,
X₁ = exposure plus instruction
X₂ = exposure

Table 3-2. Example of the instructional framework

Informational Text Feature	Defining	Modeling	Giving Examples and Non-examples	Explaining
Generic noun constructions	“General nouns are nouns that refer to a whole group of things. This book uses general nouns like fish, because the author is talking about all fish.”	“It says fish live in water. I know that fish is a general noun talking about all fish, so I know that all fish live in water.”	General nouns are nouns that refer to a group of things. Some examples include fish, sharks, and whales. Nemo would not be a general noun because it refers to a specific fish. Shamu would not be a generic noun either because it names a specific whale.	“The purpose of Information books is to give readers information about a group of things so they use general nouns like fish, insects, dinosaurs, and so on.”

Table 3-3. Instructional sequence

Weeks	Text Feature	Total read aloud sessions
1-2	Introduction of informational text and Classification/Description of attributes (structure/organization)	8
3-4	Generic noun constructions	8
5-6	Present tense verbs	8
7-8	Specialized vocabulary	8
9	Review of <i>all</i> text features weeks 1-8	4
Totals		36

Table 3-4. Data analysis

Condition	Reading Comprehension
Exposure Plus Instruction <i>n</i> = 17	Group A (pre – post)
Exposure <i>n</i> = 19	Group B (pre – post)
Comparison <i>n</i> = 13	Group C (pre – post)

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Introduction

The goal of this study was to implement informational read alouds with and without explicit instruction in informational genre features and evaluate their impact on children's comprehension and recall. Chapter 4 explains the findings from the analyses used to answer the following two research questions: (1) What is the impact of exposure versus exposure plus explicit instruction on second graders' comprehension of informational texts? (2) What is the impact of exposure versus exposure plus explicit instruction on second graders' recall of informational texts? To investigate the data, the researcher used analysis of covariance techniques to compare comprehension outcomes between each group. The researcher also used descriptive statistics to examine the linguistic analyses performed on each group's retellings. Chapter 4 presents the statistical analysis procedures and results used to draw conclusions about the impact of the instructional interventions.

Impact of Instructional Interventions on Reading Comprehension

A one-way analysis of covariance was used to compare differences in the three groups' reading comprehension scores. Group condition (exposure plus instruction, exposure, and comparison) was the between-groups factor and the comprehension measure posttest was the dependent variable. The reading comprehension measure pretest was used as the covariate.

The results showed no significant differences between groups, $F(2, 45) = 2.655$, $p = .081$. The effect size measured by partial eta squared = .106. Pairwise comparisons for this analysis were unnecessary. Examination of posttest means for each group

demonstrated that the exposure plus instruction and exposure only groups had higher posttest scores than did the comparison group, and their mean comprehension scores had increased from pre- to posttest. The exposure plus explicit instruction group mean comprehension score increased from 11.35 at pretest to 12.35 at posttest, resulting in an 8% increase, and the exposure group mean comprehension score increased from 14.36 to 14.68, resulting in a 2% increase from pre- to posttest. Examination of the pretest and posttest mean comprehension scores of the comparison group reveal a 5% decrease over the course of the nine weeks, from 11.00 at pretest to 10.46 at posttest (Table 4-1).

Impact of Instructional Interventions on Recall

One goal of this study was to determine the impact of exposure to informational texts versus exposure plus explicit instruction in informational genre features on second graders' recall of informational text. Students' recall was determined by their retellings of informational texts. The impact of the instructional interventions was determined through a descriptive linguistic analysis of each retelling and a holistic score assigned to each retelling. Descriptive statistics including all participants by group on all pretest and posttest measures was completed including the group size (*n*), mean, and standard deviations of the analyses administered.

Descriptive Linguistic Analysis

The descriptive linguistic analysis of students' retellings examined which text features were included in students' retellings and how often they were found from pretest to posttest. As described in Chapter 3, each retelling was coded for inclusion of the following four features: text structure (topic introduction - description of attributes), generic participants, timeless verb constructions, and technical or specialized

vocabulary. After coding for inclusion of these four features, percentage scores for organizational structure, present tense verbs, and generic nouns were calculated, and the number of technical or specialized terms per retelling was computed at the pretest and posttest assessment periods. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the means and standard deviations of the presence of each of the genre features in every condition at the pretest and posttest data points (Table 4-3). Analysis of covariance was also used to examine the data for each linguistic feature using the pretest scores for each feature as the covariate.

Organizational Structure

Organizational structure was calculated by dividing the number of structural elements present in each retelling over the total number of structural elements (two) typically associated with reports. Therefore, the possible percentage scores for the presence of organizational structure were 0% if neither the topic introduction nor any descriptive attributes were present, 50% if one or the other was present, or 100% if both elements of organizational structure were present. Students had to include at least two descriptive attributes to receive credit for the presence of that feature in their retelling.

The following excerpts from retellings are examples of the scores for organizational structure. An example of a retelling that received a score of 0% for organizational structure is *“Green grass and a deerfly.”* This retelling clearly shows a lack of topic introduction and descriptive attributes. Many retellings received a score of 50%, because they included only one of the two elements of organizational structure of informational texts. In this example, like the majority of the retellings which received a score of 50%, the student reported many descriptive attributes or details but did not include a clear topic introduction, *“Whales come up to the water to breathe all the air.*

Fish have babies and they have to find their own food... Fish have babies out of eggs. Fish have fins to push the water to move...” There were, however, some retellings which included a clear topic introduction, yet did not have any descriptive attributes or characteristics like this example, *“It was telling about seasons.”* An example of a retelling which received a score of 100% demonstrated a clear topic introduction and the inclusion of descriptive attributes such as this retelling excerpt, *“I remember about how the whales, they’re just like fish in so many ways... They both have fins and push the water back away from them. They both have babies and live in the water...”* This excerpt introduces the topic and then continues with descriptive attributes or characteristics about whales and fish, therefore receiving a score of 100% for organizational structure.

The ANCOVA results showed no significant differences between groups for the use of organizational structure, $F(2, 45) = .559, p = .576$. The mean percentage of organizational elements present in the retellings increased between the pretest and posttest assessment periods for each condition with the exposure plus instruction group having the highest percentage of organizational structures present at the posttest assessment period. The exposure plus instruction group had a mean of 58.8% of the organizational structures present at the pretest assessment point and a mean of 70.6% at the posttest assessment point resulting in a mean increase of 11.8%. The exposure group percentage increased from 52.6% to 65.8% (+ 13.2%) and the comparison group percentage increased from 46.2% to 57.7% (+ 11.5%). Even though all groups demonstrated increases in the percentage of organizational structures present in their retellings, the exposure plus instruction group finished with a mean 12.9% higher than

the comparison group and 4.8 % higher than the exposure group at the posttest data point.

Generic Participants

The percentage of generic participants was calculated by dividing the number of generic participants present in each retelling by the total number of participants (generic and specific) present in the retelling. For example, the following retelling excerpt received a score of 75% for generic nouns, “**You** know how **fish** swim very fast if **somebody** like kind of bumps into the **tank**? I wonder what the **tail fin** does. **It** wiggles side to side to help **fish** swim.” Out of the eight nouns included in this retelling, seven were categorized as generic participants (you, fish, somebody, tank, tail fin, it, fish) and one (I) were categorized as specific participants. The number of generic participants (7) was then divided by the total number of participants (8) resulting in a score of 88% for generic participant usage.

The ANCOVA results showed no significant differences between groups for generic noun usage, $F(2, 45) = 1.194, p = .313$. The mean percentage of generic nouns present in the retellings increased for both the exposure plus instruction group and the exposure group between the pretest and posttest assessment periods. The exposure plus instruction group’s mean increased from 86.5% to 90.3%, while the exposure group’s mean increased from 80.1% to 89.5%. On the other hand, the comparison group mean of generic participants present in the retellings decreased from 89.3% at pretest to 84.9% at posttest. At the posttest assessment point, the exposure plus instruction group had the highest mean percentage of generic participants present in their retellings compared to both the exposure and comparison groups.

Present Tense Verbs

The percentage of present tense verbs in each retelling was calculated by dividing the number of present tense verbs by the total number of verbs (in all tenses) present in each retelling. For example, the following retelling excerpt received a score of 20% for present tense verb usage, “*The seasons **was** about the winter **is** Christmas and in twenty days there **was going** to be summer and there **was** spring break. We already **got** Christmas.*” Out of a total of five verbs included in this retelling, only one was in the present tense (is), yielding a 20% score for the usage of present tense verbs.

The results showed no significant differences between groups for usage of verbs in present tense, $F(2, 45) = .509, p = .605$. Similar to the mean percentages of generic participants present in the retellings, the mean percentages of present tense verbs increased for the exposure plus instruction group and the exposure group. The mean percentages of present tense verbs increased from 83.4% to 86.1% for the exposure plus instruction group and increased from 86.2% to 88.5% for the exposure group. Although the mean percentage of present tense verbs decreased for the comparison group from pretest to posttest (95.2% to 91.5%), they had the highest percentage of present tense verbs in their retellings out of all the groups at the posttest assessment point.

Technical Vocabulary

The number of technical or specialized vocabulary terms per retelling was calculated at the pretest and posttest assessment points. The number of technical vocabulary terms present in each retelling ranged from 0 to 4, with only one retelling containing 4 technical vocabulary terms and no retellings containing 3 vocabulary terms. Examples of terms used by students in their retellings that were categorized as

technical or specialized vocabulary include: hibernate, mammals, defend, predator, flippers, blowhole, seasons, and fins.

The results showed no significant differences between groups, $F(2, 45) = .443$, $p = .645$. The mean number of technical vocabulary terms for the exposure plus instruction group increased from .58 at the pretest data point to .64 at the posttest data point. The mean number of technical vocabulary terms for the comparison group also increased from .61 to .76. The mean number of technical vocabulary terms stayed constant for the exposure group at .84 at the pretest and posttest assessment points, which accounted for the highest mean number of technical vocabulary terms for any group at the posttest assessment point.

Holistic Analysis

Each retelling was assessed and assigned a score ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 5. The ANCOVA results showed no significant differences between groups for the holistic scores, $F(2, 45) = 1.104$, $p = .340$. Overall, the retelling scores were very low for all groups at both the pretest and posttest data points (Table 4-5). Of the 49 retellings at pretest, 20 received a score of 1, 17 received a score of 2, 10 received a score of 3, 2 received a score of 4, and there were no retellings with a score of 5. At posttest, 14 received a score of 1, 28 received a score of 2, 5 received a score of 3, 2 received a score of 4, and again no retelling earned a score of 5. The mean holistic scores for both the exposure and comparison groups decreased from 1.92 pretest to 1.76 posttest, while the exposure plus instruction group stayed constant with a 1.76 mean holistic score at pretest and posttest. It is interesting to note that although the mean holistic scores do not reflect an increase in overall scores from pretest to posttest, the number of retellings that received a score of 1 decreased from 20 at pretest to 14 at

posttest. This demonstrates an improvement for the students scoring the lowest on the retelling scale. Examples of retellings from the QRI-V passage entitled *Seasons* for each of the scores 1-4 are provided.

Score 1: I remember that the four seasons is like winter, summer, and fall. It begins in a new month.

Score 2: Seasons- fall, winter, summer and spring and weather. Bugs. Storing food for the winter. Animals can die in the snow.

Score 3: I remember that fall will not give you as much light as spring or summer and summer is real hot during the day. And in fall the leaves fall down and die. And in winter it gets colder and there's less light.

Score 4: I remember that this one bug that bites is called a deerfly and I remember that there's different seasons. I remember that winter has the less light and I remember in the fall, the leaves fall off the trees. Squirrels come and save nuts. In the winter some animals have to live off their food that they gathered in the fall. And I remember summer is the longest season and spring is very warm, when plants start to grow. And in the winter, in the north, the leaves turn brown and fall off.

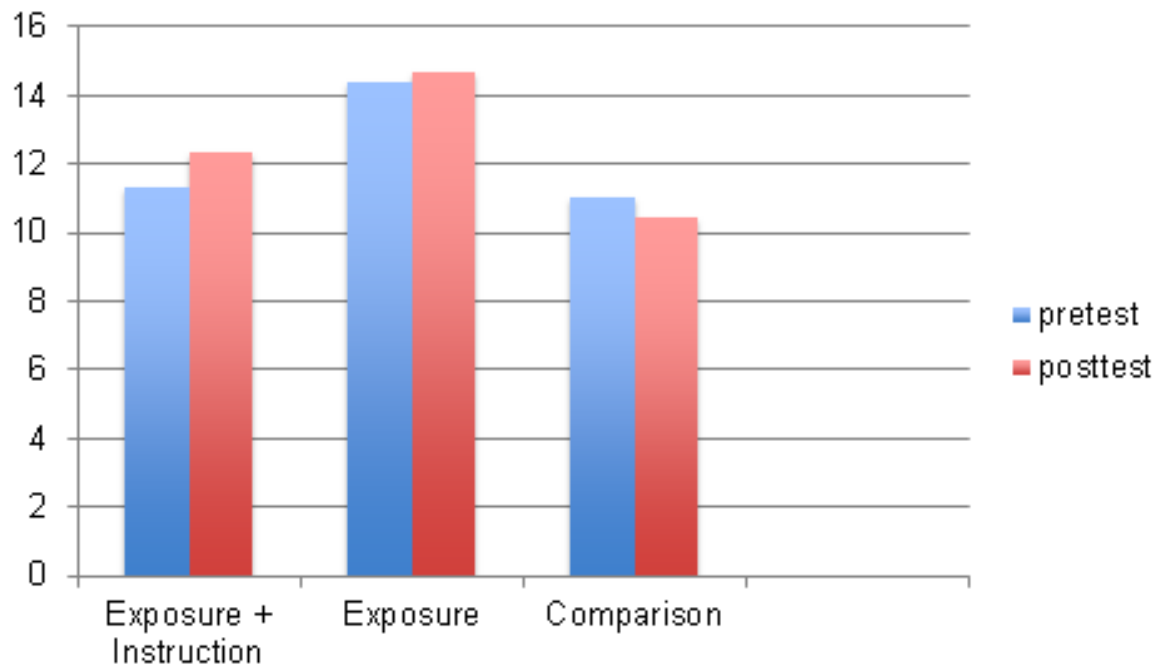


Figure 4-1. Mean scores for reading comprehension pre- and posttest by group.

Present tense verbs

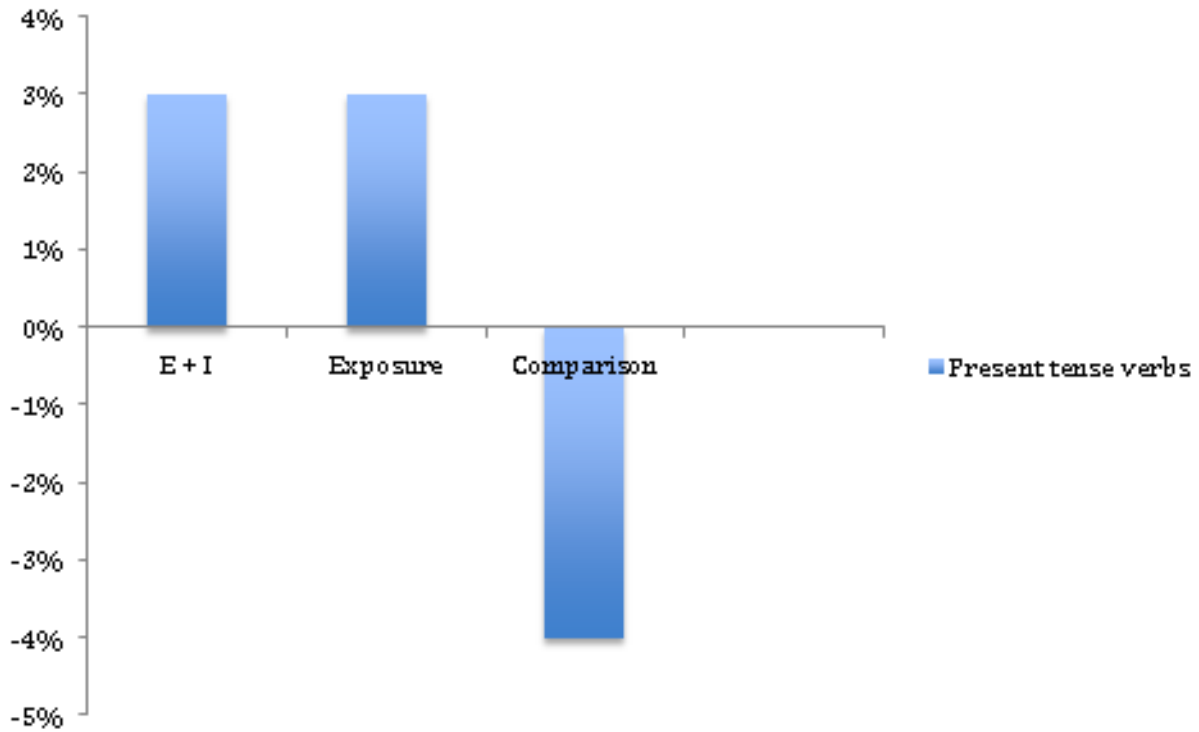


Figure 4-2. Percentage change in usage of present tense verbs from pre- to posttest.

Generic nouns

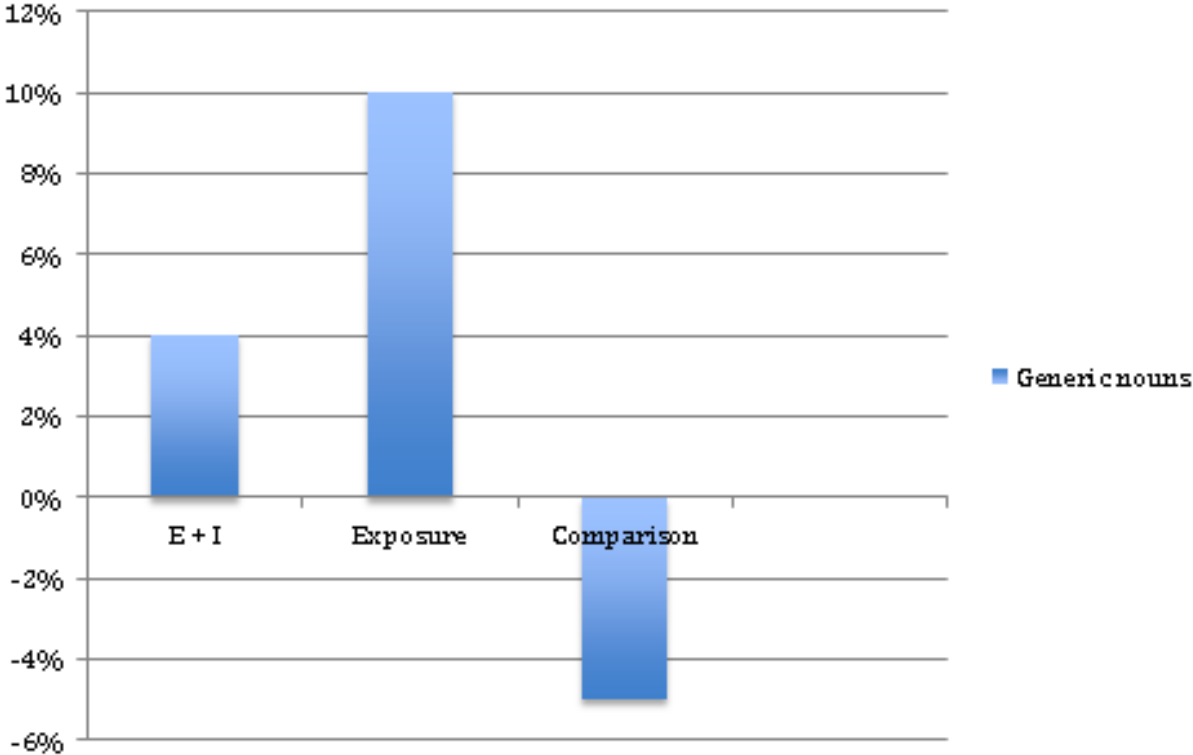


Figure 4-3. Percentage change in usage of generic nouns from pre- to posttest.

Vocabulary

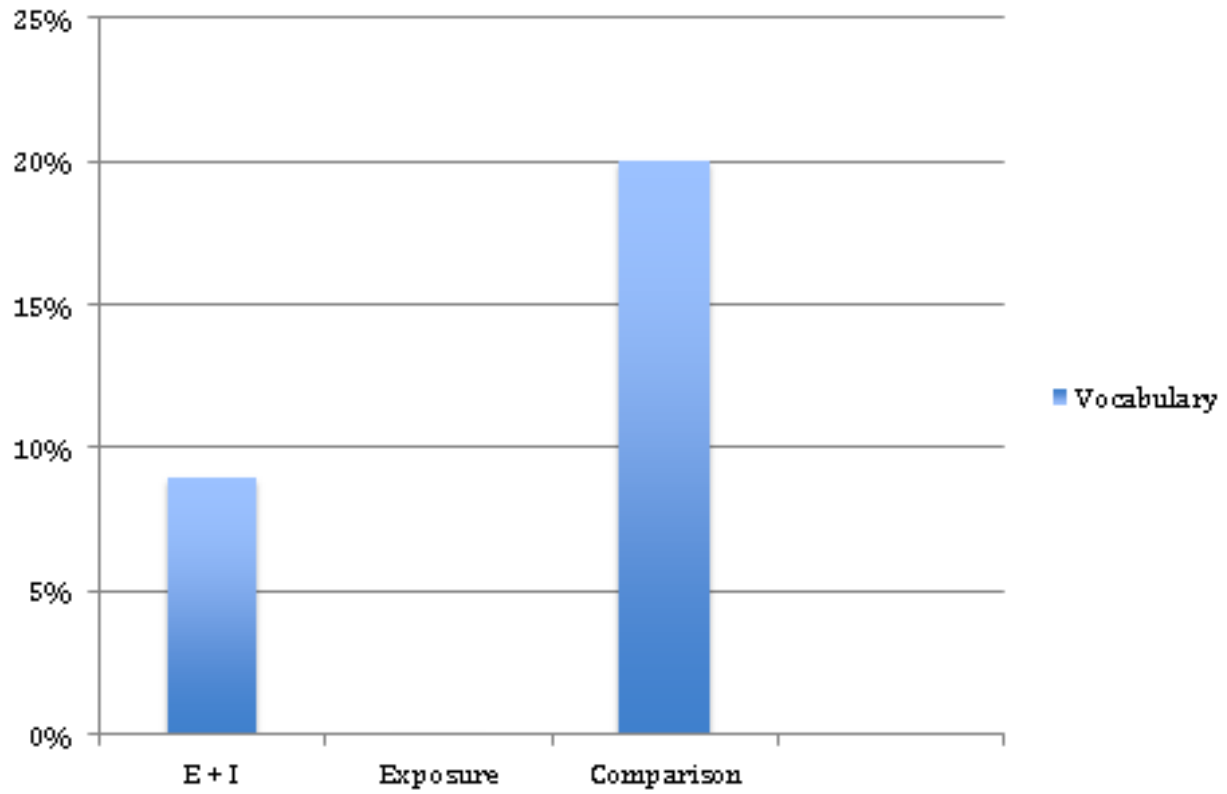


Figure 4-4. Percentage change in usage of technical vocabulary from pre- to posttest.

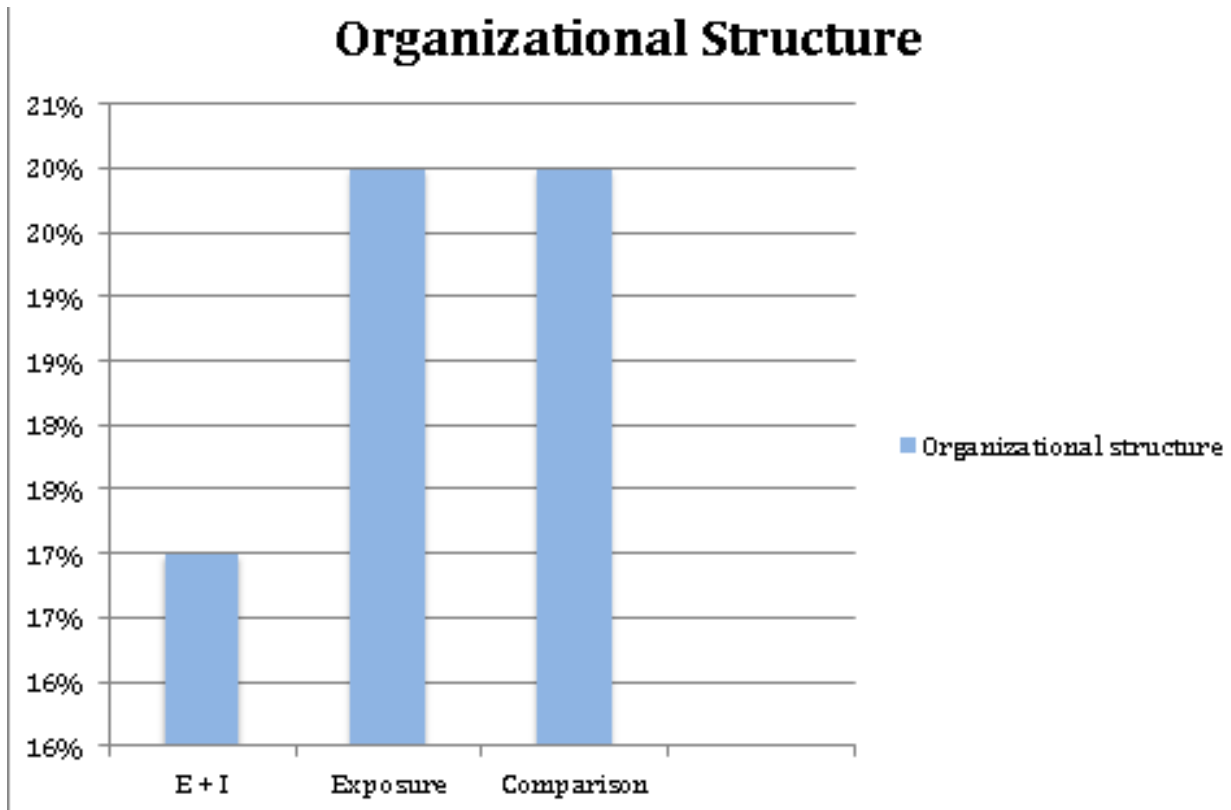


Figure 4-5. Percentage change in organizational structure from pre- to posttest.

Table 4-1. Reading comprehension pretest and posttest scores by group

	T1		T2	
	M	(sd)	M	(sd)
Exposure plus instruction	11.35	(3.33)	12.35	(3.51)
Exposure	14.36	(4.91)	14.68	(3.93)
Comparison	11.00	(2.38)	10.46	(3.04)

Table 4-2. Percentage changes for comprehension pre- to posttest

Exposure + instruction	+ 8%
Exposure	+ 2%
Comparison	- 5%

Table 4-3. Means and standard deviations for the linguistic analyses

Features	Time	Exposure + Instruction		Exposure		Comparison	
		M	(sd)	M	(sd)	M	(sd)
Verb tense	T1	83.35	(27.64)	86.21	(19.12)	95.23	(10.10)
	T2	86.05	(26.30)	88.47	(24.71)	91.46	(14.66)
Generic nouns	T1	86.47	(10.02)	80.10	(14.85)	89.30	(16.81)
	T2	90.29	(15.82)	89.47	(12.34)	84.92	(13.36)
Technical vocabulary	T1	0.58	(0.61)	0.84	(0.95)	0.61	(0.65)
	T2	0.64	(0.70)	0.84	(0.60)	0.76	(0.72)
Organizational structure	T1	58.82	(19.64)	52.63	(31.06)	46.15	(32.02)
	T2	70.58	(25.36)	65.78	(23.87)	57.69	(27.73)

Table 4-4. Percentage changes for linguistic features from pre- to posttest

Feature	Exposure + instruction	Exposure	Comparison
Verb tense	+ 3%	+ 3%	- 4%
Generic nouns	+ 4%	+ 10%	- 5%
Technical vocabulary	+ 9%	*	+ 20%
Organizational structure	+ 17%	+ 20%	+ 20%

* designates no change

Table 4-5. Holistic retelling scores by group

Score Time	1		2		3		4		5	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
Exposure + Instruction	6	5	9	11	2	1	0	0	0	0
Exposure	10	5	1	9	7	3	1	2	0	0
Comparison	4	4	7	8	1	1	1	0	0	0
Total	20	14	17	28	10	5	2	2	0	0

Table 4-6. Means and standard deviations for holistic retelling scores

Variable	Time	Exposure + Instruction		Exposure		Comparison	
		M	(sd)	M	(sd)	M	(sd)
Retell Score	T1	1.76	(0.66)	1.92	(0.86)	1.92	(0.86)
	T2	1.76	(0.56)	1.76	(0.59)	1.76	(0.59)

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of exposure to informational texts alone, and in conjunction with explicit instruction in specific informational genre features, on the comprehension and recall of second grade students. The informational genre features taught explicitly were organizational structure, generic nouns, present tense verbs, and technical vocabulary. The design of this study called for three group conditions: exposure plus explicit instruction, exposure only, and comparison. The research questions sought information about the impact of each group on comprehension and recall during the same implementation period. The results indicated that there were no statistically significant effects for comprehension by group and differential effects for genre feature usage, demonstrating students' emergent understanding of navigating informational texts.

One conclusion that can be drawn from these results is that the addition of explicit teaching of informational genre features as implemented in this study for second graders does not significantly enhance comprehension of informational texts. The data demonstrated slight increases in mean comprehension scores for the exposure plus instruction and exposure group in contrast to a slight decrease in mean comprehension scores for the comparison group, but these differences were not statistically significant. This finding contributes to the research on the efficacy of using explicit instruction of language features to aid the genre development of young children. Specifically, this finding supports those of Purcell-Gates, Duke, and Martineau (2007), who found no growth in second and third grade students' ability to comprehend informational texts after receiving explicit instruction in linguistic features associated with that genre. One

possible explanation for the limited effects of explicit instruction of genre features for second grade students may be that this instruction is occurring too early in their language development. According to Purcell-Gates, Duke, and Martineau (2007):

For children as young as seven or eight years, it may be that explicit teaching of linguistic features of specific genres is not congruent with their cognitive and linguistic abilities and thus does not facilitate acquisition of genre knowledge over and above authentic immersion in its use, but that for older children such instruction may be congruent.

Another possible factor to consider is the genre chosen for implementation in this study, which was the informational genre. It is conceivable that explicit instruction in linguistic features associated with genres more familiar to young children than informational, such as the narrative genre, may show greater effects on comprehension. The students' knowledge and exposure to a specific genre may be a predictive indicator of how successful explicit instruction in the linguistic features of that genre could prove to be on students' comprehension.

The second research question investigated the impact of explicit instruction and exposure on the recall of informational texts through examining retellings and scoring them holistically. Using an adapted version of the Richness of Retelling Scale originally created by Irwin and Mitchell (1983), retellings were scored on a scale from 1 to 5. The retelling scores for all of the groups were very low, with all three groups having the same mean of 1.76 at posttest. These findings show a consistent lack of understanding about retelling informational texts. Many students gave very short retellings consisting of one or two short sentences, others retold details but did not mention the main ideas of the text, still others retold the text incorrectly offering extraneous information not connected to the text.

One possible reason for the students' inability to adequately retell the informational texts may be a lack of instruction in retelling strategies and practice specific to the informational genre. The explicit instruction implemented in this study did not include explicit teaching in retelling informational texts. It is possible that the students had not received instruction on retelling informational texts nor received ample opportunities to practice retelling informational texts prior to this study.

Although the addition of explicit teaching of informational genre features as implemented in this study for second graders does not enhance overall recall of informational text, differential effects for the usage of specific genre features was demonstrated. Students' recall was scored holistically and showed no improvement in any of the groups from pretest to posttest; however, the linguistic analysis of genre feature usage showed differences in between group means in the usage of specific genre features from pre- to posttest. The exposure plus explicit instruction group is the only group that showed positive gains in the usage of all four genre features. The exposure group showed positive gains in the usage of three of the four genre features, with technical vocabulary usage remaining constant from pre- to posttest. The comparison group demonstrated positive gains in the usage of two of the four genre features; however, the usage of generic nouns and present tense verbs decreased from pre- to posttest. Interestingly, the only decreases in mean differences of genre feature usage occurred in the comparison group.

Similar to the findings investigating the impact of explicit instruction of genre features on comprehension, the differential learning gains in regards to the usage of specific genre features showed little difference between the exposure plus instruction

group and the exposure group. This finding again calls into question the need and effectiveness of explicit instruction in genre features at this stage of early genre development. However, there are differences between the exposure plus instruction and exposure group when contrasted with the comparison group, which highlights the importance of including informational texts in literacy activities with young children.

The exposure plus instruction and exposure groups demonstrated increased occurrences of informational genre features from pre- to posttest in their retellings, which is evidence of a developing awareness of the linguistic features associated with informational texts. The results of the present study add to the work of Pappas (1993) and Duke and Kays (1998) who also found increased awareness of the linguistic features associated with informational texts when working with young children after exposure to informational texts through read alouds. This increased knowledge of linguistic features associated with informational texts, regardless of explicit instruction, indicates that the inclusion of informational texts in primary grades may be beneficial to young children's genre development.

Implications for Practice

The primary purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of exposure coupled with explicit instruction and exposure alone on the comprehension and recall of informational texts. Evidence of positive comprehension gains, albeit not significant, for the exposure plus instruction and exposure groups in contrast to the decline in mean comprehension scores for the comparison group provide support for the inclusion of informational literacy activities in primary classrooms. The differential gains in comprehension were not so compelling as to make a strong argument for the addition of

explicit instruction of genre features, but positive gains were yielded and should be noted.

One way in which to increase the exposure young children have to informational texts would be through read alouds. As was implemented in this study, teachers performed four informational read alouds per week with their students. Teachers can link informational read alouds to concepts being taught in science or social studies in addition to simply reading aloud during literacy instruction. Besides being used as a vehicle to introduce new content, read alouds using informational texts can also aid in introducing new vocabulary and various ways data can be displayed (graphs, diagrams, tables, etc.).

Another manner in which educators can increase children's exposure to informational texts is through creating opportunities for children to read texts in the informational genre. Informational texts at varying levels need to be available in the classrooms for students to read. The students in this study were given opportunities to read informational texts almost daily. Book baskets were created by the teachers including informational texts of varying levels and topics. Students were then given the opportunity to choose texts from the basket to read independently or to read to a partner for fifteen minutes four times per week. This provided students with choices, both in the topic that they wanted to read about and with whom they wanted to read.

There are numerous ways in which educators can include literacy activities using informational texts in primary classrooms. Read alouds and providing opportunities for students to read informational texts independently are just two of the methods used during this study. Shared writing, choral reading, and guided reading groups are just a

few examples of other literacy activities that can be infused with informational texts. Educators should be aware of the exposure to informational texts they are providing to the students in their classrooms and choose to include the informational literacy activities that they feel are best suited to their instructional practice.

Limitations of the Study

There are several important considerations to take into account when interpreting the results of this study. There are certain limitations relating to the generalizability of this research to settings and participants beyond those that were studied. One such limitation is that this research includes a relatively small sample size in number of intact groups, teachers, and in number of students within those groups. It will be up to readers of this research to determine whether the findings can be generalized to other participants. A replication of this study implemented with a larger sample size may provide a clearer picture of the possible effects on comprehension and recall of informational texts.

An important aspect of reliability for this research was teacher fidelity to the degree of explicitness of the instruction of the genre features. The teacher in the exposure plus instruction group was observed weekly and his levels of explicitness during instruction were recorded. Although he scored consistently between the good and excellent range, deviations on a daily basis on his level of explicitness are unknown.

In regards to teacher participants, the varying backgrounds, educational degrees conferred, and overall teacher quality pose a complicated issue. All of the teachers in the study were teaching in their certification area. However, one teacher had a master's degree which the others did not have. Also, one teacher was a beginning teacher, while

the other two had various years of experience. There is no way to know how these variables might have influenced the students' learning throughout the study.

Implications for Future Research

The conclusions drawn from the results of this study bring about questions that bear further research. The failure of explicit instruction in specific genre features, as operationally defined in this research, to show significant gains in comprehension or recall adds empirical evidence to the discussion about how and when genres are best learned. Explicit instruction has proven to be efficacious in several areas of reading instruction including phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary and comprehension strategies (NICHD, 2000). To make the leap that explicit instruction is effective in all facets of language learning would be misleading. More knowledge about which aspects of literacy learning are best facilitated through explicit instruction and at which period of students' literacy development is still necessary.

A consideration to be addressed should be replication. Replication studies should be conducted with larger and varying samples of students to examine the impact of the explicit instruction framework on comprehension and recall of informational texts. A longitudinal study of comprehension gains resulting from consistent long-term implementation of the explicit instruction framework would help to determine if time of implementation affects student outcomes. Additionally, the explicit instruction framework using informational texts should be tested with a larger sample size to see if the sample size of this study was too small to see significant gains in comprehension and recall. Future research could also include a larger sample size of teachers to see if there are differential effects for teachers from varying backgrounds. It is possible that

teachers who have more experience or knowledge of informational texts and their features may have different outcomes than what was found in this study.

Varying comprehension assessments could also be used to assess the students' informational comprehension levels in future research. It is possible that other assessments could be used to measure the informational comprehension of students in future research when implementing the explicit instruction framework to see if the outcomes would vary.

Future research could examine the effects of the explicit instruction framework using the informational genre to see if differential effects for students at varying ability levels exist. Data analysis could investigate to see if differential effects of the explicit instruction framework exist for struggling students, students on grade level, or students reading above grade level.

The specific framework of explicit instruction implemented in this study did not produce significant gains in comprehension or recall, but other combinations of genre features or other manners of implementing explicit instruction may prove to be more effective. Other linguistic features associated with the informational genre may be more appropriate and better understood by young children. Additionally, explicit instruction could be implemented differently in future research. This may include explicit instruction delivered in small groups for extended amounts of time during reading instruction. Teachers could use explicit instruction of genre features during whole group read alouds as implemented in this research, but then extend the instruction to small groups for reinforcement, deeper understanding, and more practice opportunities for students

to see if varying methods of implementing explicit instruction demonstrates different outcomes for students.

Future research could also be conducted to examine the impact of explicit instruction using varying genres more familiar to the children, or older students who would be more familiar with the informational genre. It is possible that these factors could play an important role on student outcomes for comprehension and recall.

Modifications could be made to the group arrangements during implementation of the explicit instruction framework in future studies. In this study, the explicit instruction was delivered in whole group arrangements. The explicit instruction in linguistic features should be evaluated when delivered during small group instruction to determine if differences in comprehension and recall outcomes rely on the student arrangement during implementation. It is possible that the explicit instruction may be more effective when delivered to students in small groups.

Ultimately, this study has served to provide much needed empirical evidence as to how genre development can best be facilitated for young children and what role explicit instruction plays in that development. Exposure to specific genres is one way to facilitate genre development for young children. This study suggests that exposure to informational texts in the primary grades may be beneficial to young children's informational genre development. More research is necessary to explore effective ways of aiding young children's genre development in order to better inform practice.

APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

**College of Education
University of Florida
140 Norman Hall
Gainesville, FL 32611**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a graduate student in the College of Education at the University of Florida, conducting research on the comprehension and writing of informational texts under the supervision of Dr. Zhihui Fang. The purpose of this study is to compare students' comprehension and writing of informational text under three different conditions: one condition is a control group, which will simply continue with their regular classroom instruction, the second condition is read aloud, in which the teacher will read informational texts aloud to the students three times a week without any explicit teaching of informational text features, and the third condition is read aloud plus instruction, in which the teacher will read informational texts aloud to the students three times a week and provide explicit instruction of informational text features. The results of the study may help teachers better understand the amount of knowledge gained and allow them to design instructional practices accordingly. These results may not directly help your child today, but may benefit future students. With your permission, I would like to ask your child to volunteer for this research.

One-third of the participating children will receive instruction in features of informational texts during read alouds, while another third of the children will participate in read alouds without the instruction in text features, and the last third will simply continue with their regular daily instruction. The read alouds will be performed by your child's teacher during regular class time. The read alouds will be conducted three times

per week over an eleven-week period beginning in January and ending in April. Children will be given an informal reading inventory, which will assess their comprehension of informational text at three intervals during the study: January, April, and then in May to see if students retained the information learned during the eleven weeks. I will be performing the informal reading inventories during regular class time. Informational writing samples will also be collected from the children in January, April, and May. Although the children will be asked to write their names on their writing samples for matching purposes, their identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. We will replace their names with code numbers. Results will only be reported in the form of group data. Participation or non- participation in this study will not affect the children's grades or placement in any programs.

You have the right to withdraw consent for your child's participation at any time without consequence. There are no known risks or immediate benefits to the participants. No compensation is offered for participation. Group results of this study will be available in August upon request. If you have any questions about this research protocol, please contact me at (352) 474-9601 or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Fang, at (352) 273-4231. Questions or concerns about your child's rights as research participant may be directed to the IRB02 office, University of Florida, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611, (352) 392-0433.

Tiffany Ohlson

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily give my consent for my child, _____, to participate in Tiffany Ohlson's study of second graders'

comprehension and writing of informational texts. I have received a copy of this description.

_____ Parent / Guardian Date

_____ 2nd Parent / Witness Date

APPENDIX B
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The teacher in the exposure-plus-instruction (E + I) group received training in the features of informational texts and explicit teaching of informational text features during two workshops. Each workshop lasted approximately one hour and occurred prior to the start of the study. During the first workshop, the researcher provided a table summarizing the features of narrative and informational texts (Table A-1) and facilitated the training of the informational text features. The second workshop focused on facilitating the teacher's understanding of the explicit instruction model. The researcher discussed the four ways of being explicit during instruction of the genre features: (1) defining, (2) modeling, (3) giving examples and non-examples, and (4) explaining the function of the genre and how the genre features serve that function. An example using generic nouns was constructed and disseminated (Table A-2).

Table A-1. Features of narrative and informational texts

Genres	Social Purpose	Text Structure	Grammatical Features
Narrative	To entertain	1. Orientation 2. Complication 3. Resolution	* Specific participants * Action verbs * Past tense * Temporal conjunctions * Dialogue * Descriptive language
Report	To describe attributes, properties, behaviors, etc. of a class of things	1. General statement 2. Description of various aspects of the thing	* Many linking verbs (e.g., <i>be</i> , <i>have</i>) * Present tense * Some action verbs * Technical vocabulary * General participants * Language for defining, classifying, comparing and contrasting

Workshop activities

Various activities occurred during the workshop to help the teacher understand the text features and explicit instruction model including: examining texts in terms of their features, participating in a model lesson that includes explicit teaching of genre features and developing their own lesson from the books chosen for the read alouds to include explicit teaching of genre features. Examples of explicit statements for one feature of informational text in reading and writing were given to the teacher following the workshop (Table A-2).

Table A-2. Four attributes of explicit text

Informational Text Feature	Defining	Modeling	Giving Examples and Non-examples	Explaining
Generic noun constructions	“General nouns are nouns that refer to a whole group of things. This book uses general nouns like fish, because the author is talking about all fish.”	“It says fish live in water. I know that fish is a general noun talking about all fish, so I know that all fish live in water.”	General nouns are nouns that refer to a group of things. Some examples include fish, sharks, and whales. Nemo would not be a general noun because it refers to a specific fish. Shamu would not be a generic noun either because it names a specific whale.	“The purpose of Information books is to give readers information about a group of things so they use general nouns like fish, insects, dinosaurs, and so on.”

The goals of the workshop was to provide the teacher in the E+I group with a foundational understanding of (1) the informational text genre and its features and (2) the explicit instruction model. The workshop also provided opportunities for the teacher to practice planning and implementing read alouds that incorporate explicit instruction of genre-specific text features.

Ongoing coaching/fidelity to treatment

The teacher in the E+I group received weekly feedback and coaching from the researcher throughout the study. The purpose of this coaching was to maintain and/or increase the explicitness of the genre instruction. The following page is an example of the form used for fidelity checks and feedback.

APPENDIX C
IMPLEMENTATION OBSERVATION FORM

Class:

Date:

Title:

Author:

Total time:

Genre feature:

Table A-3. Explicit instruction

Define	Poor 1	Fair 2	Good 3	Excellent 4
* Introduced and clearly defined genre feature at start of lesson				
Model	Poor 1	Fair 2	Good 3	Excellent 4
* Modeled the genre feature using think alouds before and during the read aloud				
Examples	Poor 1	Fair 2	Good 3	Excellent 4
* Gave students examples and nonexamples of genre feature throughout read aloud * Asked students to provide examples of genre feature to monitor comprehension				
Explain	Poor 1	Fair 2	Good 3	Excellent 4
* Clearly explained the purpose of the genre feature				

APPENDIX D
RICHNESS OF RETELLING SCALE

Criteria for Establishing Level

- 5 Student includes all main ideas and supporting details; sequences properly; infers beyond the text; relates text to own life; understands text organization; summarizes; may ask additional questions; very cohesive and complete retelling
- 4 Student includes most main ideas and supporting details; sequences properly; relates text to own life; understands text organization; summarizes; cohesive and complete retelling
- 3 Student includes some main ideas and details; sequences most material; understands text organization; fairly complete retelling
- 2 Student includes a few main ideas and details; some difficulty sequencing; may give irrelevant information; incomplete retelling
- 1 Student gives details only; poor sequencing, irrelevant information; very incomplete retelling

Note. Adapted from Irwin, P. A., & Mitchell, J. N. (1983). A procedure for assessing the richness of retellings. *Journal of Reading*, 26, 394-395.

APPENDIX E
TEACHER SURVEY

Adapted from a survey used by the Early Childhood Longitudinal Program (ECLS)

<http://nces.ed.gov/ecls/index.asp>

CLASSROOM AND STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

1. As of today's date, how many children in your class belong to each of the following racial-ethnic groups?

WRITE NUMBER ON LINE. ENTER "0" ON THE LINE IF THERE ARE NO CHILDREN IN A CATEGORY.

a. Asian or Pacific Islander..... _____

b. Hispanic, regardless of race..... _____

c. Black, not of Hispanic origin..... _____

d. White, not of Hispanic origin..... _____

e. American Indian or Alaska Native _____

f. Other (Please specify) _____

Total Class Enrollment _____

2. As of today's date, how many boys and girls are there in your class? WRITE NUMBER ON LINE.

a. Number of boys _____

b. Number of girls _____

3. How many children in your class are eligible for the following services?

WRITE NUMBER ON LINE

- a. Free school breakfast..... _____
- b. Reduced-price breakfast _____
- c. Free school lunch _____
- d. Reduced-price lunch _____

4. How many children in your class have the following characteristics? WRITE NUMBER ON LINE. IF STATEMENT DOES NOT APPLY TO ANY CHILDREN IN YOUR CLASS, ENTER "0" ON THAT LINE.

- a. Are classified as Gifted and Talented _____
- b. Are participating in a Gifted and Talented program _____
- c. Are repeating this grade this year _____
- d. Are below grade level in their reading skills _____
- e. Are below grade level in their math skills _____
- f. Are above grade level in reading _____
- g. Are above grade level in math..... _____
- h. Are tardy, on an average day..... _____
- i. Are absent, on an average day _____

5. At this point in the school year how would you rate the behavior in your class? CIRCLE ONE NUMBER.

- a. Group misbehaves very frequently and is almost always difficult to handle 1
- b. Group misbehaves frequently and is often difficult to handle.... 2

- c. Group misbehaves occasionally..... 3
- d. Group behaves well..... 4
- e. Group behaves exceptionally well..... 5

6. In a typical day, how much time do the children spend in the following activities?

CIRCLE ONE NUMBER ON EACH LINE. DO NOT INCLUDE LUNCH OR RECESS BREAKS.

No Time = 1

Half hour or less = 2

About one hour = 3

About two hours = 4

Three hours or more = 5

a. Teacher-directed whole class activities? 1 2 3 4 5

b. Teacher-directed small group activities? 1 2 3 4 5

c. Teacher-directed individual activities?..... 1 2 3 4 5

d. Child-selected activities?..... 1 2 3 4 5

e. Children working collaboratively in heterogeneous groups

(not grouped by ability)?..... 1 2 3 4 5

7. To what extent do you integrate curriculum areas around common or unifying themes? (e.g., using math and science concepts in the same unit of study or using arts and social studies in the same unit of study)?

CIRCLE ONE NUMBER.

- a. Never..... 1
- b. Occasionally 2
- c. Usually..... 3
- d. All the time..... 4

READING/LANGUAGE ARTS INSTRUCTION

1. What type of materials form the core of your reading program? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.

- a. Primarily basal..... 1
- b. Primarily trade books..... 2
- c. Both basal and trade books..... 3
- d. Other materials (Please specify) _____ 4

2. About what proportion of your reading instruction time is focused on having children read for the following purposes? CIRCLE ONE NUMBER ON EACH LINE.

Almost all of the time = 1

At least two-thirds of the time = 2

At least one-third of the time = 3

Little or no time = 4

a. Reading for literary experience (e.g., stories, poetry, science fiction, folktales).....1 2 3 4

b. Reading to gain information (e.g., science articles, historical sources, textbook chapters, essays) 1 2 3 4

c. Reading to perform a task (e.g., documents, forms,directions)1 2 3 4

3. How often do children in your class engage in the following activities as part of reading? CIRCLE ONE NUMBER ON EACH LINE.

Almost every day = 1

Once or twice a week = 2

Once or twice a month = 3

Never or hardly ever = 4

a. Discuss new or difficult vocabulary 1 2 3 4

b. Read aloud1 2 3 4

c. Talk with each other about what they have read..... 1 2 3 4

d. Write about something they have read 1 2 3 4

e. Work in a reading workbook or on a worksheet 1 2 3 4

f. Read silently.....1 2 3 4

g. Read books they have chosen themselves1 2 3 4

h. Do a group activity or project about what they have read1 2 3 4

- i. Discuss different interpretations of what they have read1 2 3 4
- j. Explain or support their understanding of what they have read 1 2 3 4
- k. Take quizzes or tests1 2 3 4
- l. Watch movies, videos, filmstrips, television, or listen to tapes or compact discs.. 1 2
3 4

4. How often do you perform read alouds in your classroom? CIRCLE ONE

- a. Daily
- b. Once or twice a week
- c. Once or twice a month
- d. A couple of times a month
- e. Once per month
- f. Less than once per month

5. What is your definition of “performing a read aloud” in your classroom?

6. Which genre(s) do you generally use during read alouds in your classroom (i.e. narrative, informational, poetry, biography)?

YOUR BACKGROUND

1. What is your gender? CIRCLE ONE NUMBER.

a. Male..... 1

b. Female..... 2

2. In what year were you born?

3. Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin? CIRCLE ONE NUMBER.

a. Yes 1

b. No..... 2

4. Which best describes your race? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY

a. American Indian or Alaska Native

b. Asian

c. Black or African American

d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

e. White

5. Counting this school year, how many years have you been a teacher, including as a part-time teacher? WRITE NUMBER ON LINE.

_____ Years

6. Counting this school year, how many years have you taught this grade, including as a part-time teacher? WRITE NUMBER ON LINE.

_____ Years

7. Counting this school year, how many years have you taught in your **current school**, including part-time teaching? WRITE THE NUMBER OF YEARS TO THE NEAREST HALF YEAR (FOR EXAMPLE, 2.5, 3.5).

_____ Years

8. What is the **highest** level of education you have completed? CIRCLE ONE NUMBER.

- a. High school diploma or GED..... 1
- b. Associate's degree 2
- c. Bachelor's degree..... 3
- d. At least one year of course work beyond a Bachelor's degree but not a graduate degree..... 4
- e. Master's degree..... 5
- f. Education specialist or professional diploma based on

at least one year of course work past a Master's degree

level 6

g. Doctorate..... 7

9. If you have **an associate's or bachelor's degree**, indicate your undergraduate major field of study. CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE

a. Early Childhood Education Y N

b. Elementary Education Y N

c. Special Education..... Y N

d. Other Education-related Major (such as secondary ed.,
ed. psych., administration, music education, etc.) Y N

e. Non-Education Major (such as history, English, etc.) Y N

10. If you have a **graduate degree**, indicate the major field of study of your highest level graduate degree. CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE.

a. Early Childhood Education Y N

b. Elementary Education Y N

c. Special Education..... Y N

d. Other Education-related Major (such as secondary ed.,
ed. psych., administration, music education, etc.) Y N

e. Non-Education Major (such as history, English, etc.) Y N

11. What type of teaching certification do you have? CIRCLE ONE NUMBER.

- a. None..... 1
- b. Temporary, probational, provisional, or emergency certification 2
- c. Certificate for completion of a state “alternative certification” program..... 3
- d. Regular or standard state certificate 4
- e. Advanced professional certificate 5

12. Are you certified in these areas? CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE.

- a. Elementary Education Y N
- b. Early Childhood Education..... Y N
- c. Secondary education..... Y N
- d. Specific subject matter certification..... Y N
- e. ESL certification Y N
- f. Special education Y N

APPENDIX F
COMPREHENSION MEASURES

Second grade informational passages and comprehension questions from
Teacher Created Resources, Inc. (2010):

Day and Night

The American Toad Hops Again

Busy as a Bee

The Platypus

The Rock Cycle

Grasslands

* Housel, D. J. (2010). Nonfiction reading comprehension: Grade 2. Westminster, CA:
Teacher Created Resources.

Day and Night

Every day the sun comes up. And every day the sun goes down. Why?

The sun doesn't move around the Earth. The Earth spins as it goes around the sun. The part of the Earth facing the sun has day. The part of the Earth facing away from the sun has night. It takes the Earth 24 hours, or one day, to spin around once.

Sometimes we see the moon at night. Sometimes we see it in the day, too. The moon is always in the sky. But the sun is so bright we usually can't see the moon during the day. The moon goes around the Earth. It takes the moon 27.3 days to go around once.

The Earth is not just spinning. It is also following a path around the sun. It takes the Earth one year to go all the way around the sun. During that time it has different seasons. The seasons are based on where Earth is on its path around the sun.

Day and Night

Comprehension questions

1. Which does *not* move around another object?
 - a. the Earth
 - b. the moon
 - c. the sun

2. What season comes after winter?
 - a. spring
 - b. fall
 - c. summer

3. Because the Earth is always spinning, part of the planet is always
 - a. wet
 - b. in the dark
 - c. cold

4. The word usually means
 - a. almost never
 - b. sometimes
 - c. most of the time

5. What happens every 27.3 days?
 - a. The moon goes around the Earth once
 - b. The moon goes around the sun once
 - c. A week passes

6. Picture a sunset. What is happening on the other side of the world?
 - a. The sun and moon are seen together
 - b. The sun is rising
 - c. The moon comes out

The American Toad Hops Again

You may see American toads in a park or your yard. But they didn't start out there. They hatched from eggs in a pond. They stayed tadpoles for ten days. Toad tadpoles are darker and smaller than frog tadpoles. Like fish, tadpoles have gills. As their limbs grow and their tail shrinks, they get lungs. Then they must get out of the water or drown. When they leave the pond, they are tiny toads.

Toads catch bugs with their tongues and swallow them. Although baby toads are tiny, no toad ever thinks one is a bug. Toads can see a glow on another toad's skin. That way they don't eat each other. The first summer a toad sheds its skin every three days. While it sleeps during its first winter, its skin gets bumpy.

Toads can live up to 30 years. They can get really big. But snakes and birds eat most of them before that. If they live to be three years old, they go to a pond. There they lay eggs that will hatch into more tadpoles.

The American Toad Hops Again

Comprehension questions

1. What age can a toad reach?
 - a. 30 years old
 - b. 3 years old
 - c. 30 months old

2. What happens last?
 - a. The tadpole has gills.
 - b. The tadpole hatches from an egg
 - c. The tadpole has lungs

3. If a toad sees a snake, the toad will
 - a. eat the snake
 - b. try to get away from it
 - c. not care

4. The word *shrinks* means
 - a. breaks
 - b. gets bigger
 - c. gets smaller

5. Why do toads wait three years before laying eggs?
 - a. They need to grow up
 - b. They need to eat bugs
 - c. They need to sleep through the winter

6. Picture a toad catching food. What is it grabbing?
 - a. a snail
 - b. a baby toad
 - c. a fly

Busy as a Bee

Bees keep busy all year. In spring the worker bees go out to find flowers. At each flower they get pollen or nectar. Then they go back to the hive. They turn the nectar into honey. They store the pollen to eat later.

The queen lays all of the eggs. But the worker bees do all of the work. Some worker bees feed the baby bees. They give them a mix of honey and pollen called beebread. They build the honeycomb and guard the hive. Other worker bees take care of the queen.

In the fall, worker bees use water and plant sap to fix cracks in the hive. Then the worker bees gather around their queen and move their wings rapidly. They keep her warm.

The bees help us. By going from plant to plant, bees spread pollen. This makes some plants grow fruits and vegetables. Without bees, fewer fruits and vegetables would grow.

Busy as a Bee

Comprehension questions

1. Which bees lay all the eggs?
 - a. worker bees
 - b. queen bees
 - c. baby bees

2. What happens last?
 - a. The worker bees feed the baby bees
 - b. The worker bees get pollen from flowers
 - c. The worker bees make beebread

3. What happens after a bee visits the flowers on a cherry tree?
 - a. The tree grows more roots
 - b. The tree drops its leaves
 - c. The tree grows cherries

4. The word *rapidly* means
 - a. around
 - b. slow
 - c. fast

5. What do bees make that we sometimes eat?
 - a. honey
 - b. pollen
 - c. beebread

6. Picture a boy getting close to a beehive. Worker bees buzz all around him.
What will probably happen next?
 - a. The bees will fly away
 - b. The bees will sting him
 - c. The bees will give him honey

The Platypus

A platypus is a mammal that lives only in Australia. Their wide, flat tails and webbed feet make them good swimmers. They scoop up worms and shellfish from stream bottoms with their wide, flat snouts. They use the claws on their feet to walk and to dig dirt. They dig burrows along streams.

Unlike most mammals, the platypus lays eggs. The female uses grass and leaves to make a nest at the end of her burrow. Next, she blocks the burrow's opening with dirt. Then she lays two or three eggs. After ten days, the babies hatch. They drink her milk for four months.

Adult platypuses are small. They are less than two feet long (0.6 m) and weigh just 5 pounds (2.3 kg). Their thick brown fur makes them look bigger. Hunters used to kill them for their fur. But now it is illegal to kill a platypus.

The Platypus

Comprehension questions

1. You can figure out that the platypus cannot?
 - a. fly
 - b. walk
 - c. dig

2. What happens first?
 - a. The female blocks off the burrow
 - b. The female lays eggs
 - c. The female makes a nest

3. What makes platypuses so different from most other mammals?
 - a. They live in Australia
 - b. They lay eggs
 - c. They are small

4. The word *illegal* means
 - a. against the law
 - b. a good idea
 - c. too hard

5. What do young platypuses share with all other mammal babies?
 - a. They hatch from eggs
 - b. They can swim
 - c. They drink milk from their mother

6. Picture a platypus burrow. What does it look the most like?
 - a. a nest in a tree
 - b. a hole in the ground
 - c. a big cave in some rocks

The Rock Cycle

Like the blankets on a bed, the Earth has rock layers in its crust. There are many layers. The top layers are the newest. The bottom ones are the oldest.

Rocks on the Earth's surface are always wearing away. Rain, ice, wind and moving water make little pieces break off. These little pieces of rock are like dirt. They blow away or get carried away by water. When the pieces are dropped, they form a new layer. Later more rock pieces cover them. In this way, layer after layer builds up.

After a long time, heat and pressure squeeze the lowest layer. The rocks get hotter and hotter. They begin to change. Rocks way down inside of the Earth melt. Later they come back to the Earth's crust as lava.

The Rock Cycle

Comprehension questions

1. When rocks are under great heat and pressure they
 - a. wear away
 - b. melt
 - c. form a new layer

2. Which rocks are the oldest?
 - a. the rocks in the layers near the Earth's crust
 - b. the rocks near a volcano
 - c. the rocks in the layers deep inside the Earth

3. How do melted rocks return to Earth's crust?
 - a. when a volcano erupts
 - b. when a tornado hits
 - c. when too little rain falls

4. Another word for the Earth's *surface* is
 - a. crust
 - b. lava
 - c. layers

5. The top rock layers
 - a. are always melting
 - b. have been there for the longest time
 - c. have been there the least amount of time

6. Picture the rocks in a desert. What is slowly wearing them down?
 - a. moving water
 - b. wind
 - c. ice

Grasslands

Earth has different kinds of land areas. Grasslands are one kind. Grasslands are found far from oceans and lakes. These areas are covered by grass and are often called plains. Few trees grow there. The ground is flat. There is little rain. America's grasslands are in the plains states.

Grasslands cover parts of Africa. Zebra and antelope live there. Buffalo used to live on the North American plains. Today sheep and cattle graze there. They share the land with rabbits, deer, foxes, and skunks.

Grasslands have hot summers and cold winters. Their dirt is filled with dead, rotting grass. This makes rich, black soil that grows plants well. So all over the world grasslands have been turned into farms. These farms grow corn, wheat, and oats. People call our plains states "The Breadbasket of the World." These states grow so much grain that there is enough to share with other countries.

Grasslands

Comprehension questions

1. Most grasslands are
 - a. near lakes
 - b. flat
 - c. wet

2. What happened first?
 - a. Buffalo lived on the plains
 - b. People killed the buffalo
 - c. Cattle lived on the plains

3. A grassland is a little like a desert because both areas have
 - a. winters that are very cold
 - b. rich soil for growing plants
 - c. little rain

4. Another word for *graze* is
 - a. eat
 - b. plain
 - c. farm

5. What types of wild animals live in a grassland?
 - a. Ones that like cool summers
 - b. Ones that need mild winters
 - c. Ones that hide in or eat grass

6. Picture a grassland on a sunny day. What don't you see?
 - a. a barn
 - b. pine trees
 - c. a field of corn

REFERENCES

- Anderson, R.C., Hiebert, E.H., Scott, J.A., & Wilkinson, I.A.G. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the Commission on Reading*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.
- Armbruster, B. B., Anderson, T. H., & Ostertag, J. (1987). Does text structure/summarization instruction facilitate learning from expository text? *Reading Research Quarterly*, 22(3), 331–346.
- Beck, I.L. & McKeown, M.G. (2001). Text Talk: Capturing the benefits of read-aloud experiences for young children. *The Reading Teacher*, 55, 10-20.
- Brabham, E.G. & Lynch-Brown, C. (2002). Effects of teachers' reading-aloud style on vocabulary acquisition and comprehension of students in the early elementary grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 94, 465-473.
- Calkins, L., Montgomery, K., Santman, D., & Falk, B. (1998). *A teacher's guide to standardized tests: Knowledge is power*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Caswell, L. & Duke, N. K. (1998). Non-narrative as catalyst for literacy development. *Language Arts*, 75, 108-117.
- Chall, J. (1996). *Stages of reading development*. McGraw-Hill.
- Chall, J. S., Jacobs, V. A. & Baldwin, L. E. (1990). *The reading crisis: Why poor children fall behind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Christie, F. (1987). Factual writing in the first years of school. *Australian Journal of Reading*, 10, 207-216.
- Christie, F. (1998). Learning the literacies of primary and secondary schooling. In F. Christie & R. Misson (Eds.), *Literacy and schooling* (pp. 47–73). London: Routledge.
- Clay, M. M. (1991). *Becoming Literate: The construction of inner control*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Cote, N. C., Goldman, S. R., & Saul, E. U. (1998). Students making sense of informational text: Relations between processing and representation. *Discourse Processes*, 25, 1–53.
- Daniels, H. A. (1990). Young writers and readers reach out: Developing a sense of audience. In T. Shanahan (Ed.), *Reading and Writing together: New perspectives for the classroom* (pp. 99-129). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Derewianka, B. (1990). *Exploring how texts work*. Maryborough, Victoria, Australia: Primary English Teaching Association.

- Dickinson, D.K. & Smith, M.W. (1994). Long-term effects of preschool teachers' book readings on low-income children's vocabulary and story comprehension. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 29, 104-122.
- Dickinson, D. K. & Tabors, P. O. (2001). *Young children learning at home and school: Beginning literacy with language*. Baltimore: Brookes.
- Donovan, C.A., & Smolkin, L.B. (2001). Genre and other factors influencing teachers' book selections for science instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36(4), 412–440.
- Donovan, C.A., & Smolkin, L.B. (2002). Considering genre, content, and visual features in the selection of trade books for science instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 55(6), 502–520.
- Duke, N. K. (2000). 3.6 minutes per day: The scarcity of informational texts in first grade. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35, 202-224.
- Duke, N. K. & Kays, J. (1998). "Can I say 'Once upon a time?': Kindergarten children developing knowledge of information book language. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 13, 295-318.
- Duthie, C. (1996). *True stories: Nonfiction literacy in the primary classroom*. York, ME: Stenhouse.
- Egan, K. (1986). *Teaching as storytelling*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Egan, K. (1993). Narrative and learning: A voyage of implications. *Linguistics and Education*, 5, 119-126.
- Englert, C. & Hiebert, E. (1984). Children's developing awareness of text structures in expository materials. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 76(1), 65-74.
- Fang, Z. (2002). The construction of literate understanding in a literature-based classroom. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 25, 109-126.
- Fang, Z. (2008). Going beyond the fab five: Helping students cope with the unique linguistic challenges of expository reading in intermediate grades, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 51(6), 476-487.
- Fang, Z., Lamme, L., & Pringle, R. (2010). *Language and literacy in inquiry-based science classrooms, grades 3-8*. New York: Corwin & NSTA Press.
- Fisher, C. W. & Hiebert, E. H. (1990). Whole language: Three themes for the future. *Educational Leadership*, 47, 62.

- Flood, J., & Lapp, D. (1986). Types of texts: The match between what students read in basals and what they encounter in tests. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 21, 284–297.
- Freedman, A. (1993). Show and tell? The role of explicit teaching in the learning of new genres. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 27, 222-251.
- Freedman, A. & Medway, P. (1994). Locating genre studies: Antecedents and prospects. In A. Freedman & P. Medway (Eds.), *Genre and the new rhetoric* (pp. 1-20). London: Taylor & Francis.
- Gee, J.P. (1992). *The social mind: Language, ideology, and social practice*. New York: Bergin & Garvey.
- Gee, J. (2001). Reading as situated language: A sociocognitive perspective. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 44, 714-725.
- Gersten, R., Fuchs, L. S., Williams, J. P., & Baker, S. (2001). Teaching reading comprehension strategies to students with learning disabilities: A review of research. *Review of Educational Research*, 71, 279–320.
- Goldman, S. R. & Rakestraw, J. A. (2000). Structural aspects of constructing meaning from text. In M. L. Kamil, P.B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research Volume 3* (pp. 311-335). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Hall, K. M., Sabey, B. L., & McClellan, M. (2005). Expository text comprehension: Helping primary-grade teachers use expository texts to full advantage. *Reading Psychology*, 26, 211-234.
- Halliday, M. (1975). *Learning how to mean: Explorations in the development of language*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M. & Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- Halliday, M. & Martin, J. R. (1993). *Writing science: Literacy and discursive power*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Hickman, P., Pollard-Durodola, S., & Vaughn, S. (2004). Storybook reading: Improving vocabulary and comprehension for English-language learners. *The Reading Teacher*, 57, 720-730.
- Hirsch, E. D., Jr. (2006). *The knowledge deficit*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Hirsch, E. D., Jr. (2003). Reading comprehension requires knowledge-of words and the world. *American Educator*, 27, 16-22.

- Hoffman, J. V., McCarthey, S. J., Abbott, J., Christian, C., Corman, L., Curry, C., et al. (1994). So what's new in the new basals? A focus on first grade. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 26, 47-73.
- Holdaway, D. (1979). *The foundations of literacy*. Sydney: Ashton Scholastic.
- Horiba, Y. (2000). Reader control in reading: Effects of language competence, text type, and task. *Discourse Processes*, 29, 223-267.
- Horowitz, R., & Freeman, S. H. (1995). Robots versus spaceships: The role of discussion in kindergartener' and second graders' preferences for science texts. *The Reading Teacher*, 49, 30-40.
- Irwin, P. A., & Mitchell, J. N. (1983). A procedure for assessing the richness of retellings. *Journal of Reading*, 26, 394-395.
- Jacobs, J. S., Morrison, T. G. & Swinyard, W. R. (2000). Reading aloud to students: A national probability study of classroom reading practices of elementary school teachers. *Reading Psychology*, 21, 171-193.
- Kamberelis, G. (1998). Relations between children's literacy diets and genre development: You write what you read. *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 3, 7-53.
- Kintsch, W. (1988). The role of knowledge in discourse comprehension: A constructive-integration model. *Psychological Review*, 95, 163-182.
- Kintsch, W., & Young, S. R. (1984). Selective recall of decision-relevant information from texts. *Memory and Cognition*, 12, 112-117.
- Lemke, J. (1994, November). *Genre as a strategic resource*. Paper presented at the 84th Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, Orlando, FL.
- Lemke, J. L. (1990). *Talking science: Language, learning, and values*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Martin, J. R. (1989). *Factual writing: Exploring and challenging social reality*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Meyer, B. J. F. & Freedle, R. O. (1984). Effects of discourse type on recall. *American Educational Research Journal*, 21, 121-143.
- Meyer, B. J. F., & Poon, L. W. (2001). Effects of the structure strategy and signaling on recall of text. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93, 141- 159.
- Moffett, J. (1968). *Teaching the universe of discourse*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

- Mohr, K. A. J. (2006). Children's choices for recreational reading: A three-part investigation of selection preferences, rationales, and processes. *Journal of Literacy Research, 38*, 81-104.
- Morrow, L. M., Tracey, D., Woo, D., & Pressley, M. (1999). Characteristics of exemplary 1st grade literacy instruction. *Reading Teacher, 52*, 462-476.
- Moss, B. (2005). Making a case, and a place for effective content area literacy instruction in the elementary grades. *The Reading Teacher, 59*, 46-55.
- Moss, B. (1997). A qualitative assessment of first graders' retelling of expository text. *Reading Research and Instruction, 37*, 1-13.
- Moss, B., Leone, S., & Dipillo, M.L. (1997). Exploring the literature of fact: Linking reading and writing through information tradebooks. *Language Arts, 74*, 418-429.
- Moss, B. & Newton, E. (2002). An examination of the informational text genre in basal readers. *Reading Psychology, 23*, 1-13.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2004). *Report on National Assessment of Educational Progress. The Nation's Report Card: Reading Highlights 2003*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction (NIH Publication No. 00-4769)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Newkirk, T. (1987). The non-narrative writing of young children. *Research in the Teaching of English, 21*, 121-144.
- Newkirk, T. (1989). *More than stories: The range of children's writings*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Oakhill, J. & Yuill, N. (1996). Higher order factors in comprehension disability: Processes and remediation. In C. Cornoldi & J. Oakhill (Eds.), *Reading comprehension difficulties: Processes and intervention* (pp. 69-92). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Ogle, D. & Blachowicz, C. L. Z. (2002). Beyond literature circles: Helping students comprehend informational text. In C.C. Block & M. Pressley (Eds.), *Comprehension instruction: Research-based best practices* (pp. 259-274). New York: Guilford.

- Palincsar, A. & Duke, N. (2004). The role of text and text-reader interactions in young children's reading development and achievement. *The Elementary School Journal*, 105(2), 183-197.
- Pappas, C. (1991). Young children's strategies in learning the "book language" of information books. *Discourse Processes*, 14, 203-225.
- Pappas, C. (1993). Is narrative "primary"?: Some insights from kindergarteners' pretend readings of stories and informational books. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 25(1), 97-129.
- Pentimonti, J. M., Zucker, T. A., & Justice, L. M. (in press). What are preschool teachers reading in their classrooms? *Reading Psychology*.
- Pentimonti, J. M., Zucker, T. A., Justice, L.M., & Kaderavek, J. N. (2010). Informational text use in preschool classroom read-alouds. *The Reading Teacher*, 63(8), 656-665.
- Pressley, M., Rankin, J. & Yokoi, L. (1996). A survey of instructional practices of primary teachers nominated as effective in promoting literacy. *The Elementary School Journal*, 96, 363-384.
- Price, L.H., van Kleeck, A., & Huberty, C.J. (2009). Talk during book sharing between parents and preschool children: A comparison between storybook and expository book conditions. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 44(2), 171-194.
- Purcell-Gates, V. (1988). Lexical and syntactic knowledge of written narrative held by well-read-to kindergartners and second graders. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 22, 128-160.
- Purcell-Gates, V. (1995). *Other people's words: The cycle of low literacy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Purcell-Gates, V. & Duke, N. K. (2001, August). Explicit explanation/teaching of informational text genres: A model for research. Paper presented at the Crossing Borders: Connecting Science and Literacy Conference, Baltimore.
- Purcell-Gates, V., Duke, N. K. & Martineau, J. A. (2007). Learning to read and write genre-specific text: Roles of authentic experience and explicit teaching. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 42, 8-45.
- Reese, D.A., & Harris, V.J. (1997). "Look at this nest!": The beauty and power of using informational books with young children. *Early Child Development and Care*, 127(1), 217-231.

- Ruetschlin, H., Dreher, M. J., & Finger, M. (2005, June). *Children's reading comprehension in grades 2-4 across genre and question type*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Reading, Toronto, Canada.
- Schleppegrell, M. (2004). *The language of schooling: A functional linguistics perspective*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Schugar, H. (2008). *Fourth graders' expository text comprehension: Indicators from NAEP on the role of income, out-of-school reading experiences, and in-school reading experiences*. Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3324784)
- Senechal, M. & Cornell, E.H. (1993). Vocabulary acquisition through shared reading experiences. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 28, 360-374.
- Smolkin, L.B., & Donovan, C. A. (2001). The contexts of comprehension: The information book read aloud, comprehension acquisition, and comprehension instruction in a first-grade classroom. *The Elementary School Journal*, 102, 97-122.
- Smolkin, L. B., & Donovan, C. A. (2003). Supporting comprehension acquisition for emerging and struggling readers: The interactive information book read-aloud. *Exceptionality*, 11, 25-38.
- Smolkin, L.B., McTigue, E.M., & Donovan, C.A. (2008). Explanation and science text: Overcoming the comprehension challenges in nonfiction text for elementary students. In C.C. Block & S.R. Parris (Eds.), *Comprehension instruction: Research-based best practices* (2nd ed., pp. 183–195). New York: Guilford.
- Snow, C., Burns, M. S. & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre Analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Szymusiak, K., & Sibberson, F. (2001). *Beyond leveled books: Supporting transitional readers in grades 2-5*. Markham, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers Limited.
- Taylor, B. M. & Samuels, S. J. (1983). Children's use of text structure in the recall of expository material. *American Educational Research Journal*, 20, 517-528.
- Teale, W. H. (1984). Reading to young children: Its significance for literacy development. In H. Goelman, A. A. Oberg, & F. Smith (Eds.), *Awakening to literacy* (pp. 110-121). Exeter, NH: Heinemann.

- Teale, W. (1986). Home background and young children's literacy development. In W. Teale & E. Sulzby (Eds.), *Emergent literacy: Writing and reading* (pp. 173-206). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Varelas, M., & Pappas, C.C. (2006). Intertextuality in read-alouds of integrated science-literacy units in urban primary classrooms: Opportunities for the development of thought and language. *Cognition and Instruction, 24*(2), 211–259.
- Venezky, R. L. (2000). The origins of the present-day chasm between adult literacy needs and school literacy instruction. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 4*, 19-39.
- Weaver, C. & Kintsch, W. (1991). Expository text. In R. Barr, M. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, & P. D. Pearson (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research*, Vol. 2 (pp. 230-245). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Wells, G. (1985). Preschool literacy-related activities and success in school. In D. R. Olson, N. Torrence, & A. Hildyard (Eds.), *Literacy, language and learning: The nature and consequences of reading and writing* (pp. 229- 255). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wells, G. (1986). *The meaning makers: Children learning language and using language to learn*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Wellington, J. & Osborne, J. (2001). *Language and literacy in science education*. Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.
- Williams, J. P. (2005). Instruction in reading comprehension for primary-grade students: A focus on text structure. *Journal of Special Education, 39*, 6-18.
- Wolfe, M. B. W. (2005). Memory for narrative and expository text: Independent influences of semantic associations and text organization. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition, 31*, 359–364.
- Wolfe, M. B. W. & Mienko, J. A. (2007). Learning and memory of factual content from narrative and expository text. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 77*, 541-564.
- Wollman-Bonilla, J. (2000). Teaching science writing to first graders: Genre learning and recontextualization. *Research in the Teaching of English, 35*, 35-65.
- Yopp, H. K. & Yopp, R. H. (1999, December). *Primary grade students' exposure to informational text*. Paper presented at the California Reading Association's annual conference research institute, Long Beach, CA.
- Yopp, R.H., & Yopp, H.K. (2006). Informational texts as read alouds at school and home. *Journal of Literacy Research, 38*(1), 37–51..

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tiffany Ohlson completed her undergraduate degree in Spanish from the College of the Holy Cross in 1998. She received her master's degree in elementary education in 1999 from Lesley University. She was a literacy specialist in Boston, Massachusetts from 1999-2004. Tiffany received her Ph.D. from the University of Florida in 2011 with a specialization in Reading Education. Her research interests include reading comprehension, content area literacy, and professional development. She is a member of several professional organizations dedicated to improving reading education for all children including the International Reading Association, American Educational Research Association, and the Literacy Research Association. Tiffany, and her husband, Matthew, are blessed with three beautiful children, Gabe, Brady, and Nate.