


## The Effectiveness of a Read-Aloud Program in Enhancing Oral Narrative and Vocabulary Skills among Grade 2 EFL Students

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### Abstract

**Objectives:** This study aimed to investigate the impact of a read-aloud program on the oral language development of EFL Grade 2 students and examine its efficacy in story retelling and vocabulary knowledge.

**Methods:** To achieve the research objectives, 10 weeks of an additional instruction was provided to 220 randomly selected students, forming an experimental group. Another group of 223 participants served as the control group. The oral program consisted of 8 read-aloud stories that were of high quality and interest for Grade 2 level. Each story targeted three target vocabulary words and incorporated analytical questions, guided questions, and retelling activities. The retelling assessment was carried out for both groups.

**Results:** The results revealed a statistically significant improvement in story retelling and expressive vocabulary scores in favor of the experimental group. Story retelling showed a moderate impact, but the read-alouds had the strongest effect on students' understanding of the *setting*, which was the most improved story element. The other elements (*characters*, *main events*, and *the solution*) showed improvement, but the impact was more modest. Students also made progress in using expressive vocabulary, though the effect was smaller.

**Conclusion:** The findings indicate that read-alouds are important to improve EFL oral language skills through vocabulary and story retelling, so it is recommended that read-aloud programs be integrated as part of the English language curriculum in elementary EFL classes. (222 words).

**Keywords:** Expressive vocabulary, Narrative retelling, Grade 2, Oral language development, Read-aloud intervention .

### فعالية برنامج القراءة الجهرية في تعزيز مهارات السرد الشفهي والمفردات لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الصف الثاني

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### الملخص

**الأهداف:** هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء أثر برنامج القراءة الجهرية على تنمية المهارات الشفوية لدى طلاب الصف الثاني في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL)، كما سعت إلى فحص فاعليته في إعادة سرد القصص وتنمية المعرفة بالمفردات.

**المنهجية:** لتحقيق أهداف البحث، تم تقديم تعليم إضافي لمدة عشرة أسابيع لـ 220 طالباً تم اختيارهم عشوائياً، وشكلوا مجموعة تجريبية. في المقابل، تألفت مجموعة ضابطة من 223 مشاركاً آخرين. تألف البرنامج الشفوي من ثماني قصص تقرأ بصوت عالٍ، ذات محتوى عالي الجودة وشيق لمستوى صف الثاني. عززت كل قصة ثلاث كلمات مستهدفة من المفردات وأسئلة تحليلية معمقة ونقاشات موجّهة، بالإضافة إلى تمارين إعادة السرد. وقد تم إجراء تقييم لإعادة السرد لكلتا المجموعتين.

**النتائج:** كشفت النتائج عن تحسّن ملحوظ من الناحية الإحصائية في مهارات إعادة السرد والمفردات التعبيرية لصالح المجموعة التجريبية. أظهرت إعادة السرد تأثيراً متوسطاً، إلا أن القراءة الجهرية كان لها التأثير الأقوى على فهم الطلاب لعنصر المكان، والذي كان العنصر الأكثر تحسّناً في القصة. أما العناصر الأخرى (الشخصيات، الأحداث الرئيسية، والحل) فقد شهدت تحسّناً أيضاً، لكن التأثير

كان أكثر تواضعاً. كما أحرز الطلاب تقدماً في استخدام المفردات التعبيرية، رغم أن التأثير كان أقل نسبياً.

الخلاصة: تشير النتائج إلى أن القراءة الجهرية تُعد وسيلة فعالة لتحسين المهارات الشفوية في اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية، من خلال تنمية المفردات وتمكين الطلاب من إعادة سرد القصص. لذا، يوصى بدمج برامج القراءة الجهرية ضمن منهج اللغة الإنجليزية في صفوف المرحلة الابتدائية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المفردات التعبيرية، إعادة سرد القصة، الصف الثاني، تنمية اللغة الشفوية، التدخل من خلال القراءة الجهرية

## 1. Introduction

Oral language is considered one of the most important language skills, as it is the medium through which students convey their thoughts, express their feelings and emotions, and acquire knowledge. Early delays in oral language skills among EFL learners can negatively affect their academic success in secondary school and university (Al-Hawamdeh & Sawalha, 2017). Several factors contribute to this limitation, for instance, limited exposure to English, insufficient speaking practices, and vocabulary shortages. Given the growing emphasis on oral proficiency in EFL education, vocabulary acquisition and overall language development have become central concern for EFL researchers and practices. To improve oral skills, teachers can incorporate read-aloud stories accompanied by speaking activities and interactive discussions to encourage students to use English in a fun and meaningful way.

Read-aloud instruction is a widely used and enjoyable teaching practice in early elementary classrooms in the U.S. Existing studies indicate the beneficial impacts of read-aloud instruction on English native speakers' oral language and print awareness (NELP, 2008; Swanson et al., 2011; Baker, S.K. et al. 2013; Silverman et al., 2013; Collins, 2016; Baker, D.L. et al. 2020).

However, in the EFL context, few studies have explored the positive effects of read-alouds in enhancing students' English language proficiency. For example, a read-aloud intervention program carried out for three months for Indonesian learners in Grades 7, 8, and 9 demonstrated improvement in all four skills (listening, writing, reading, and speaking), with the best improvement in listening (Ayu et al., 2017). In the same context, interactive read-aloud sessions in an EFL Grade 10 classroom showed strong engagement in reading (Sandy & Mukti, 2020). Similar results were observed by EFL middle Taiwanese students after a 10-week read-aloud intervention (Sun, 2020). Moreover, in a Lebanese context for 53 kindergarteners aged 5 to 6 years, discussions during read-alouds provided opportunities for children to showcase their bilingual French speaking skills (Oueini et al., 2008).

The current research examines the effects of read-aloud instruction and checks for possible influence on expressive vocabulary and narrative retells in Grade 2 EFL Lebanese students. This study addresses a gap in the existing studies conducted on read-alouds in the EFL Lebanese context. Its significance lies in targeting pre-

elementary students in a whole-classroom, as the majority of read-aloud studies have focused on secondary and intermediate EFL learners. In addition, it focuses on oral language and how it can be improved, which is currently a main challenge facing EFL students and teachers in schools.

In this research, the conceptualization of oral language includes two elements: vocabulary knowledge and narrative retelling. According to Goodrich et al. (2023), narrative ability is a substantial feature of oral language. Narrative retelling is a complex form of oral production that is widely acknowledged for fostering oral and written communication abilities (Miller et al., 2006). The significance of narratives is not limited to just their plot components. The words and sentences used are a core part of any story's structure. The general plot outline (the marco elements) organizes the big picture of the narrative. Moreover, specific language details, such as how sentences are built, word endings, and word meanings, make up the smaller, more detailed parts of the story (the micro-structure). These narrative elements reflect fundamental skills that are crucial for oral capabilities (Spencer & Petersen, 2020).

Therefore, story retelling can be a significant measure that tests oral language skills (Nicolopoulou et al., 2015; Petersen & Spencer, 2016; Spencer & Petersen, 2020). For this reason, many studies consider it a main skill that reflects the oral proficiency level (Miller et al., 2006; Reese et al., 2010; Kieffer, 2012; Huang et al., 2022). For instance, Reese et al. (2010) studied the role of oral narrative skills in reading English. The story retelling of children in primary school (6–7 years old) was analyzed. The study tested oral narrative skills not only through story memory but also through story quality by asking about the orientation elements (when, where and who) and the evaluation elements (why this story is important). Another study that used story retelling to evaluate oral language proficiency was conducted by Miller et al. (2006). The researchers asked the child to listen to a story and then retell it with the help of wordless pictures. This task requires the participants to use the appropriate vocabulary repertoire, to construct sentences of different syntax (local level), and to organize the events to make a coherent story (at the global level). The results of the retelling were very positive for both the participants' word reading and reading comprehension of English.

In this study, vocabulary growth or improvement is measured as a separate variable of the read-aloud program. Research has shown that vocabulary is a fundamental component of oral proficiency and includes both receptive and expressive vocabulary (Clarke et al., 2010; Kim, 2015; Hulme et al., 2018). In many studies, vocabulary has been measured as a main feature of oral language (e.g., Catts et al., 2015; LARRC & Chiu, 2018).

Learners with oral language deficits have insufficient receptive vocabulary and poor semantic processing. Previous findings have shown that bilinguals perform more poorly than native speakers of English in terms of vocabulary (Uchikoshi et al., 2016). Moreover, secondary Spanish students have deficits in oral language due to their inadequate foreign language vocabulary knowledge at the onset of their learning (Sparks et al., 2017).

Other studies on EFL learners reported that both the breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge were positively correlated with academic listening comprehension and oral language (Teng, 2016; Zhang & Zhang, 2022).

In conclusion, the role of oral vocabulary in oral comprehension is well-documented. A rich vocabulary allows individuals to infer meaning from context, engage in more complex conversations, and build a deeper understanding of language structures (Kim, 2015; Baker, D.L. et al. 2020).

Foreign learners of English who are not proficient in oral language should receive instruction that improves their oral comprehension skills. A teacher read-aloud is a whole-group instructional method that enhances students' oral language, as they think, respond, and participate interactively.

A growing number of studies have stressed the effectiveness of read-aloud stories in oral language instruction through the development of vocabulary, narrative skills, syntax, and listening comprehension (Kim, 2015; Lee & Lee, 2023). Studies have revealed that read-alouds have a positive effect on oral language, with an effect size of 0.5 (e.g., WWC, 2007).

In terms of vocabulary gains, extended vocabulary activities help Grade 2 students learn vocabulary words in-depth during read-aloud sessions compared to students who simply hear words in read-aloud stories (August et al., 2018). Likewise, preschool kids learned new words much better when they received 15 minutes of focused vocabulary instruction, in contrast to children, who were exposed to the words in stories without any explanation or discussion (Silverman et al., 2013). In summary, this approach of including vocabulary extended activities during and after read-alouds improved learners' receptive and expressive vocabulary.

A key study was conducted by Baker, D.L. et al. (2020), who examined the outcomes of a specialized read-aloud program implemented in whole-classroom settings with 638 first-grade students. Of these, 44% were English learners, while the remaining students spoke a different language at home. The study took place across

39 classrooms in 12 U.S. schools, with classrooms assigned to either a treatment or a comparison group. The results showed that students in the treatment group demonstrated greater depth in vocabulary knowledge than those in the comparison group. However, the intervention did not yield significant effects on listening or on expository and narrative retelling tasks. The significance of the study lies in the vocabulary gains that structured read-alouds with embedded vocabulary instruction can have and that can boost language development in diverse learners. Baker, D.L. et al. (2020) stressed the use of recommended read aloud practices to yield better outcomes. These findings suggest that the content and quality of instruction play a major role in whether students benefit from interventions.

The aforementioned study is similar to the research at hand, as both assess a read-aloud program implemented in a whole-classroom setting. Second, Baker, D.L. et al. (2020) investigated the outcomes of a read-aloud program on vocabulary and narrative retells which are the two variables measured in the current study. Moreover, both studies included treatment and control groups to compare the results. Compared with Baker's 19-week read-aloud intervention, the current study implemented a shorter, 10-week intervention. While both studies focused on diverse student populations, Baker's research addressed a broader group of 39 classrooms of Grade one diverse learners, whereas the current study specifically examined 16 classrooms of second grade English language learners in a Lebanese context. A key distinction lies in the types of texts used: Baker's intervention incorporated both narrative and expository texts, along with structured before-, during-, and after-reading instructional components. In contrast, the current study utilized only narrative texts with the same structure. Additionally, Baker's study evaluated the fidelity of implementation to ensure the intervention was delivered as intended, a step not included in the current research.

In conclusion, most studies have shown that read-alouds generally have a moderate positive impact on children's oral language. Positive results were obtained for vocabulary and comprehension, the two main skills relevant to this research. The aim of this study is to examine the effects of read-aloud stories on improving the oral language skills of EFL Grade 2 students following a 10-week implementation in a whole classroom.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

The EFL participants in Grade 2 have oral language weaknesses and struggle with speaking, listening and communication in the English language even after high school. Moreover, very few studies have investigated the efficacy of a read-aloud program implemented for EFL Lebanese learners in pre-elementary classes. Thus, the primary purpose of this study is to investigate the positive impact of second-grade read-aloud intervention on oral language skills through the development of vocabulary

knowledge and story retelling. This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the read-aloud program impact the expressive vocabulary development of EFL Grade 2 students?
2. Does the read-aloud program influence the story retellings of EFL Grade 2 students?

### 3. Significance of the Study

This study may lead to a main shift in an academic instructional programme to a new one that focuses on oral language and communicative skills. The results may help instructors, educators, and curriculum designers implement interactive read-aloud stories for EFL pre-elementary students to improve their oral skills by boosting their expressive vocabulary and retelling abilities.

### 4. Study Limitations

One limitation of this study is the inability to observe whether the teachers used the recommended practices more frequently and with higher quality of the read-aloud program in all 16 sections. Another limitation is that the research did not measure other oral skills like listening comprehension. Additionally, the restriction of time was a weakness, as teachers could not implement the oral program for more extended weeks.

### 5. Definitions of Concepts and Terms

*Oral Language:* It is the process by which words, sentences, and discourses are interpreted (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). Some researchers refer to oral language comprehension as listening comprehension and consider it equivalent (e.g., Ouellette and Beers, 2010). Oral language includes vocabulary, syntax, inferencing and comprehension (Rogde et al., 2019).

*Read-Aloud:* It is the practice of reading aloud stories or books to young children by a teacher or an adult (Swanson et al., 2011; Giroir et al., 2015).

### 6. Methodology

#### 6.1. Design

An experimental study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of read-aloud stories in oral language by comparing an experimental group (receiving additional read-aloud instruction) with a control group (not receiving any additional instruction). Four private schools belonging to the same educational institution were chosen for the study. Eight sections were randomly selected from a total of 30 Grade 2 classes across four schools (2 per school). Another 8 distinct sections were also randomly chosen to serve as the control group. These control classes followed the mainstream school curriculum without participating in any supplementary intervention. The design, steps for implementation, and

Table 2).

**Table 2:** Three-day Instructional Plan of Read-Aloud Stories.

Day	Focus	Duration (minutes)
1	Comprehension and Vocabulary	30
2	Discussion and Vocabulary Reinforcement	30
3	Retelling	30-40

scoring rubric are described in detail to permit replication.

### 6.2. Participants

The participants were chosen from four private Lebanese schools that follow the same curriculum and instructional material. They adopt the same policies and guidelines in teaching and assessment. The schools teach English as a first foreign language. A total of 443 EFL students whose native language is Arabic were randomly selected for the study. All participants had an average age ranging from 7 to 8 years and similar socioeconomic backgrounds. Seven teachers were responsible for implementing the intervention program in accordance with the recommended practices and guidelines. They had substantial experience teaching primary classes for an average of 6 years, with bachelor's degrees in English Language or education in teaching or translation. (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Distribution of Participants Across the Control and Experimental groups.

No. participants	Group type	Grade
223	Control	2
220	Experimental	2

### 6.3. The Read-Aloud Program

The read-aloud program is an additional instruction added to the mainstream English Language curriculum and designed specifically for the experimental group. The program was developed by carefully selecting eight high-quality read-aloud stories. The narrative texts were selected based on their level of interest, cultural relevance, rich vocabulary, and thematic novelty creating opportunities for classroom discussion. The program was supplemented with an instructional guide including strategies and steps, activities, guided questions, and various technological resources as PowerPoints and videos for every book (Error! Reference source not found.). The chosen read-aloud stories are of appropriate language level:

1. Staying Warm in Winter (Lexile 500)
2. Splash, Waddle, and Swim (Lexile 520)
3. Time to Plant (Lexile 450)
4. The Great Onion Search (Lexile 410)
5. Listen! (480)
6. Wrapped with Love (Lexile 410)
7. Use Your Words (Lexile 470)
8. Ready for the Beach (Lexile 400)

Each story involved two main aspects to be reinforced: (1) vocabulary and (2) story retelling, as skills to be taught in every read-aloud story and assessed later on. The instruction of each read-aloud was covered over three days (

The instructional guide included a detailed three-day planning of every story as follows:

**Day 1: 30 minutes**

The teacher introduced the read-aloud story, elicited predictions, read it for the first time, asked comprehension questions, and identified the three target vocabulary words. All questions of predictions were included in the guide. The student-friendly definitions were provided with multiple examples, and new contexts of the target words were supported with multi-media, such as interactive videos and colorful pictures of each word.

**Day 2: 30 minutes**

On the second day of instruction, the teacher re-read the story and asked deep comprehension questions. The critical thinking questions were available to the instructors. Students were prompted about the setting, events, and theme and were motivated to use comprehension strategies such as making inferences, visualizing, and summarizing. The read-aloud teachers encouraged conversations about the vocabulary words where they would ask questions whose answers included the new words. These strategies allowed for in-depth learning of the target vocabulary.

**Day 3: 30–40 minutes**

On the third day, the teachers modeled retelling for the students. The summary of the story was included in the guideline pamphlet with pictures of main scenes. Students had to retell the story individually by looking at the illustrations/pictures as cues using the learned vocabulary words.

**6.4. Training Teachers of the Experimental Group**

Training teachers and school coordinators of English language took place on a one-day workshop. The training sessions included detailed explanations of the steps to be followed and overview of the routines of vocabulary instruction, story explanation, and retelling. For the sake of proper implementation by the teachers inside the classes, a PowerPoint Presentation, including all the aforementioned features, was created for each story and sectioned into three instructional days.

**6.5. Instruments**

*6.5.1. Story retelling assessment*

In this study, a story retelling assessment was performed at the end of the experiment. The researcher selected *Harvest Soup* (lexile level 400) as the retelling assessment. It has a plot with a conflict and a resolution. The assessed story was read aloud twice by the teacher as the students were looking at its illustrations. Then, the students were pulled to the examination room, which included a screen of illustrations of the assessed story as cues. To ensure inter-rater reliability, a teacher and a coordinator evaluated each student individually by filling out a scoring chart.

The retelling assessment was administered to measure the oral language at the macro and micro levels (Miller et al., 2006; Peña et al., 2014; Frizelle et al., 2018; Shivabasappa et al., 2018; Huang et al., 2021; 2022). The macro elements refer mainly to narrative features (Heilmann et al., 2010). According to the selected retelling rubric, the macro elements are characters, setting, main events (including the plot), and the solution or resolution. The micro elements are syntax and vocabulary, but only the vocabulary micro element was chosen for the assessment (

**Table 3: ).**

**Table 3:** Retelling Story Elements.

Scale		Macro Elements		Micro Element	
Element	Character	Setting	Elements	Solution	Vocabulary

*6.5.2. Retelling scoring rubric*

Students’ retellings were evaluated by experienced teachers and school coordinators who were accustomed to and trained to assess students and to use the rating scale. Each macro and micro element was rated on a 1 to 3 scale that represented beginning, developing, and proficient levels, respectively (Houghton Mifflin, 2008). Each rater was trained on the rubric (from 1 to 3) to evaluate each element. Children were not penalized for grammatical errors.

First, for the character element, the student scored 1 if he/she only knew the main character, 2 if he/she mentioned most of the main characters while retelling, and 3 if he/she mentioned the characters and their names and knew their relations. For instance, in the assessed story *Harvest Soup*, a student scored 1 if he/she only mentioned the character “*Isabel*”; he/she received 2 points if “*Isabel and her grandma*” were stated; and

he/she scored 3 if the three characters “*the granddaughter “Isabel”, the grandma, and the mom*” were mentioned and if the relationship between them was well understood.

Concerning the setting, the student would score 1 if he/she knew either where or when the story took place, 2 if he/she knew part of the places while retelling and knew when the events took place, and 3 if he/she could identify all the places where the characters were going and at what time while retelling.

For the main events element, the story events were counted and listed separately for each story. The student scored 1 if he/she mentioned two or three main details, 2 if half the details were identified (e.g., 5 to 6 details out of 10), and 3 if the student retold most of the details in a way that showed complete comprehension.

The last assessed macro narrative element was the solution or the resolution. The scoring was distributed

depending on whether the students mentioned only what happened at the end (e.g., *They made soup*), added more details (*The mom came and all had soup for dinner*), or showed the feelings of the characters (*The mom came and all had soup as dinner, and the soup was yummy or the mom liked the soup*).

The vocabulary micro elements that was assessed during retelling was expressive vocabulary. The rating scale ranged from 1 to 3. Expressive vocabulary was not easy to evaluate. The researcher listed all the key

**Table 4).**

**Table 4:** Retelling Story Elements and their Scoring Rubric.

Scale	Macro Elements			Micro Element
Element Scoring	Character	Setting	Main Events [1, 2, 3]	Vocabulary [1, 2, 3]

**7. Results**

**7.1. Story Retelling**

The comparative analysis of the retelling assessment scores for the Grade 2 control and experimental groups was conducted using descriptive statistics as an initial

**Table 5).** These results suggest that the experimental intervention had a positive impact on students' performance on storytelling tasks. To assess whether the observed differences between the two groups were statistically significant, a MANOVA test was performed. The MANOVA revealed a statistically significant multivariate effect, Pillai's Trace = 0.113, F(4, 438) = 13.969, p < .001, partial η<sup>2</sup> = 0.113. This means that the likelihood of the observed differences occurring by random chance is extremely low. As a result, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>), which states that "the distribution of

vocabulary of each story, and the student would score 1 if he/she said only the basic words of the story (e.g., *garden, picked, vegetables, soup*), 2 if he/she said most of the keywords (e.g., *garden, picked, vegetables, soup, pulled up, tomatoes, squash, onions, potatoes, wash*), or 3 if all the keywords were mentioned easily and fluently (e.g., *harvest, garden, picked, vegetables, soup, pulled up, dug up, tomatoes, squash, onions, potatoes, filled the basket, wash, cut, put, a pot of water, boiled, cut vegetables for dinner, favorite*) ().

step. The experimental group demonstrated consistently higher mean scores than did the control across all four narrative components: character, setting, main events, and solution (

scores is the same across categories of group type", was rejected for all four narrative-dependent variables (**Table 6**). In other words, the results confirm that there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of their retelling scores. The rejection of the null hypothesis provides strong evidence that the intervention was effective in improving students' retelling skills.

The effect size represented by Partial Eta Squared (Partial η<sup>2</sup>) is equal to 0.113, which is considered a medium effect size.

**Table 5:** Descriptive Statistics for Narrative Retelling Scores by Group (Grade 2)

Story Element	Group Type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Characters	control	2.13	0.805	223
	experimental	2.45	0.748	220
Setting	control	1.71	0.833	223
	experimental	2.29	0.869	220
Main events	control	2.04	0.787	223
	experimental	2.32	0.759	220
Solution	control	1.96	0.859	223
	experimental	2.30	0.828	220

**Table 6:** MANOVA Test for Narrative Retelling Scores by Group (Grade 2).

Effect	Value	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power
Pillai's Trace	0.113	13.969	<0.001	0.113	55.874	1.000

To further analyze the differences between the control and experimental groups in terms of narrative retelling abilities, one-way ANOVA was used to compare the two groups across the four key narrative dependent variables. The results revealed that for each of the four elements,

**Table 7).**

Concerning the effect size, *setting* stands out with the largest effect size (η<sup>2</sup> = 0.105), which means that the read-aloud had the greatest impact on the setting element.

the difference between the two groups was statistically significant, with p-values less than 0.001, suggesting that the experimental intervention had a substantial effect on students' narrative retelling abilities (

The other story elements (*characters, main events, and solution*) all had small to medium effect sizes, suggesting a measurable but more modest impact.

**Table 7:** One-way ANOVA for Narrative Retelling Scores by Group (Grade 2).

Story Element	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power
Characters	18.244	<0.001	0.040	18.244	0.989
Setting	51.857	<0.001	0.105	51.857	1.000
Main events	14.305	<0.001	0.031	14.305	0.965
Solution	17.551	<0.001	0.038	17.551	0.987

After establishing a statistically significant result via ANOVA, a Least Significant Difference (LSD) post hoc test was conducted to further explore the nature of the differences between the control group and the

**Table 8**). This finding indicates that the control group consistently had lower mean scores compared to the experimental group for each of the assessed narrative elements: *characters*, *setting*, *main events*, and *solution*.

**Table 8:** LSD Pairwise Comparisons for Narrative Retelling Scores by Group (Grade 2).

Story Element	Mean Difference (control-experimental)	Sig.
Characters	-0.315	<0.001
Setting	-0.582	<0.001
Main events	-0.278	<0.001
Solution	-0.336	<0.001

These findings suggest that read-aloud additional instruction had a considerable positive impact on students' retelling abilities. The experimental group's higher scores indicate that the read-aloud program helped students develop a better understanding of story structure, improved memory recall, and an enhanced ability to articulate key narrative elements.

While reading aloud, the teacher evaluators observed that the experimental group displayed greater confidence during the retelling assessment. Most students narrated the events with ease, and even low achieving students are able to recall and recount most parts of the story. Notably, they accurately described the various locations and changes in the setting, which had the largest effect size ( $\eta^2 = 0.105$ ) compared with other narrative elements. The assessed story, *Harvest Soup*, had different settings (*in the garden before the mom arrived, in the kitchen preparing soup, and at the dinner table after the mom arrived from her work*). The experimental group used the pictures effectively, moved sequentially through events with appropriate transitional words, and demonstrated a high level of independence in retelling.

This reflects the instruction of the 8 read-aloud stories that were engaging and entertaining for the students because the stories were carefully selected to align with their cultural background and interests. The stories addressed seasons, animals, planting, going to the zoo, manners and good behavior, and family relations. The students interacted actively with each story, fostering a deep connection with the content. The read-aloud sessions also became an opportunity for sharing personal experiences, which enhanced students' expressive oral skills by encouraging them to participate and share their own narratives (Attili & Nusr, 2015; Kim, 2025).

One of the many benefits of read-aloud stories for EFL students is their ability to contextualize various

experimental group. The results of the LSD test revealed a consistent negative mean difference across all dependent narrative elements (

The negative mean difference suggests that the intervention provided to the experimental group had a positive effect, leading to significantly higher performance in retelling assessments.

language structures and vocabulary, making it easier for learners to acquire new linguistic skills. Through authentic contexts, students are exposed to academic language, allowing them to connect meaning with form. During read-aloud sessions, students listened to diverse sentence structures and complex syntax, which challenged them to use different language patterns in meaningful contexts, particularly when retelling stories or discussing events. This advantage has been widely recognized in previous research (Baker, S.K. et al. 2013; Giroir et al., 2015).

The students learned new concepts such as animal behavior in winter, names and sounds of forest animals, vegetable planting, and grocery items. These stories enriched their knowledge of various topics, providing a meaningful context for learning. This is particularly significant, as a lack of background information often hinders EFL learners from understanding oral and written texts.

These findings align with existing research on oral narrative language instruction, showing that such interventions can enhance oral narrative skills in children with varied backgrounds and learning abilities (Reese et al., 2010; Pico et al., 2021). This is also in line with the positive outcomes of oral narrative interventions in whole-classroom setting for KGs and elementary children (e.g., Gillam et al., 2014; Spencer et al., 2018).

Though there is limited research that measured narrative ability among EFL students, the results are compatible with previous research involving English bilingual children, sometimes referred to as English Language Learners. Studies on bilinguals that have used narrative retelling or storytelling have shown how this aspect is an integral part of English oral language skills (Miller et al., 2006; Kieffer, 2012; Geva & Farnia, 2012; Peña et al., 2014; Shivabasappa et al., 2018; Huang et al., 2022).

## 7.2. Expressive Vocabulary

Expressive vocabulary was assessed on the basis of the key words students used during their retelling. Vocabulary use was scored out of 3. The mean values of

**Table 9**). This suggests that the students in the experimental group used wider and more vocabulary in their retelling than did the students in the control group. One-way ANOVA confirmed that this difference was statistically significant (**Table 10**). The LSD test revealed

**Table 9:** Descriptive Statistics for Expressive Vocabulary Scores by Group (Grade 2).

Group Type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Control	1.68	0.736	223
Experimental	1.95	0.723	220

**Table 10:** One-way ANOVA test for Expressive Vocabulary Scores by Group (Grade 2).

F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power
14.980	<0.001	0.033	14.980	0.971

In this study, expressive vocabulary was measured using raw scores from story retell assessments, specifically by counting the number of lexical words used by second-grade students. The results showed higher mean scores that were statistically significant for expressive vocabulary for the experimental students compared to their counterparts in the control group. Most students in the control group failed to use accurate and specific words that expressed the events. As an example, some students used synonyms such as “took” and “caught” instead of the keywords “picked up”, “dug up”, or “pulled up”; students failed to produce target vocabulary items missed such as “onion”, “squash”, etc. Consequently, these results indicate how the read-aloud program improved the expressive vocabulary of Grade 2 students and led to substantial gains for the experimental group in their vocabulary ability.

Expressive vocabulary, the ability to communicate thoughts and ideas, is best developed through contextualized learning activities. Research consistently demonstrates that this approach enhances both the breadth and depth of vocabulary acquisition (Baker, D.L. et al. 2020). Non-native speakers benefit from encountering academic language within meaningful learning environments (Baker, S.K. et al. 2013; Giroir et al., 2015). Read-alouds offer a rich context for introducing new vocabulary words. In this study, teachers presented three key vocabulary words from each read-aloud and then targeted them through activities and discussions, encouraging student engagement and usage. The second-grade students responded positively to the meaningful context of the stories. As Giroir et al. (2015, p. 642) suggested, "Explicit vocabulary instruction along meaningful text interaction can accelerate vocabulary for English language learners," a finding applicable to EFL learners owing to their shared characteristics. An EFL study of Grade 4 Taiwanese students examining vocabulary improvement demonstrated that repeated read-alouds combined with teacher explanations of word meanings led to positive outcomes on students' English proficiency levels (Lin, 2014). While research has

the expressive vocabulary scores of the retelling assessment of Grade 2 control versus experimental groups were higher for the experimental group (

a lower mean score in the control group compared to the experimental group (Mean Difference = -0.268, and Sig. <0.001). The effect size of the expressive vocabulary shown through Partial Eta Squared ( $\eta^2=0.033$ ) is small to medium.

emphasized the importance of oral interaction for language development, especially vocabulary (Nasir & Al-Abbadi, 2005; Huang et al., 2022), the oral read-aloud program addressed this importance by incorporating meaningful activities that allowed EFL students to actively use new vocabulary while retelling the read-aloud story.

## 7.3. Narrative Retellings and Cognitive Skills

Retelling a story calls for focusing not only on the linguistic form (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) in which a story is presented but also on cognitive resources, such as short-term memory and attention. According to Kim (2015), one cognitive skill that is a significant component of oral language/listening comprehension is working memory. Working memory is directly related to storytelling since the student has to rehearse the events mentally or repeat them aloud after the teacher. This means that children with limited working memory might face difficulties in fully remembering and processing the content of the story. The teachers witnessed this when reciting for few students who struggled to reproduce most of the details of the assessed story; they were only able to recall few events.

Making inferences is another cognitive skill that is related to retelling. For example, students have to infer the main problem, conflict, or resolution of a read-aloud story. Sometimes, they have to draw inferences about the relationships between characters and their feelings to be able to retell a story. Studies have shown that making inferences is even a substantial predictor of oral language (Lepola et al., 2016). In the assessed story “*Harvest Soup*”, the students had to infer that the mom is outside home, and grandma and Isabel were preparing dinner by making soup for her. They had to infer that the mom was surprised. In fact, few students were able to deduce this detail.

## 7.4. Potential Confounding Factors

The additional program sharpened students' listening skills, as each story in the program was read aloud by the teacher in class. Students had to answer referential,

analytical and critical thinking questions about the details and main events, which required careful listening comprehension. Even the assessment involved a short story that was read aloud twice, and then the students had to listen to be able to retain all the events and to retell the story using their own words. In this study, listening comprehension was indirectly evaluated, but it was not formally assessed.

One of the primary syntactic features of narratives is the frequent use of complex sentence structure to describe sequences of events, relationships, or cause-and-effect. This feature was reflected in the students' language. During retelling, the participants of the experimental groups generally used complete simple, compound, and complex sentences when narrating the story according to teachers' observations.

## 8. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study provides evidence new knowledge by providing evidence that a 10-week read-aloud intervention can significantly enhance Grade 2 students' retelling skills. In fact, the intervention had the strongest effect on students' ability to describe the setting, suggesting that read-aloud strategies may be particularly effective in supporting this aspect of narrative understanding. While the other story elements (*characters, main events, and solution*) also improved,

their gains were more modest, indicating differential impacts across narrative components. Additionally, the study demonstrates that students exposed to the intervention used a broader and richer vocabulary in their retellings, highlighting the program's potential to support both narrative structure and vocabulary development. Collectively, these gains enhance students' oral language skills. Therefore, integrating read-alouds in early elementary grades may resolve the problem faced by the majority of EFL students with poor oral language.

It is recommended to integrate an oral read-aloud program within the English Language curriculum at schools. A program integrating analytical questions, vocabulary-building activities, interactive discussions and story-map exercises to help students effectively internalize key narrative elements. A retelling practice is recommended at the end of every read-aloud by guided play or dramatization. This rigorous design of the content and implementation of oral read-aloud intervention in elementary classes can help overcome significant oral comprehension and production deficits.

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