

Kindergarten children's story structure understanding through story retelling

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Introduction

- Retelling stories is a widely used technique that helps young children to develop a sense of story structure (story grammar), story comprehension and oral language complexity

(Gambrell, Koskinen & Kapinus, 1991; Morrow, 1985, 1986, 2005; Pelegriini & Galda, 1982; Vretudaki, 2011; Vretudaki & Tafa, 2011).

Introduction

- Through story retelling young children review what they have listened to, organize their thoughts and demonstrate their comprehension of story main ideas and details

(Paris & Paris, 2003; Schisler, Joseph, Konrad & Alber-Morgan, 2010; Vretudaki, 2011; Vretudaki & Tafa, 2011).

Introduction

With practice in story retelling, young children:

- Develop narrative skills.
- Develop comprehension.
- Understand the story structure and use in narratives story grammar elements such as:
 - setting
 - theme
 - characters plans
 - plot episodes
 - resolution
 - ending.

Introduction

- By reconstructing a story young children think about the sequence of story events and build an internal representation of the story which leads to the comprehension of story structure

(Morrow, O'Connor & Smith, 1990; Vretudaki, 2011; Vretudaki & Tafa, 2011).

Introduction

- Story retelling is a difficult activity for young children (Marjanovic-Umec, Kranjc & Fekonja, 2002; Morrow, 2005, Morrow & Gambrell, 2004).

Introduction

- However, studies have shown that young children can be able to reconstruct and retell a story if they are trained and be helped by the use of **various visual aids** and be **actively involved** in the story retelling

(Brown, 1975; Pellegrini & Galda, 1982; Vretudaki & Tafa, 2011).

Purpose

- The purpose of this study was the implementation of an intervention program:
 - to train kindergartner children in story retelling and
 - to examine whether this training helped them to understand the story structure and retell the story structural elements in sequence.

Sample

- The program was implemented in two (2) kindergarten classrooms at a private kindergarten.
- Each classroom had 16 children, a total of 32 children
- The majority of the children were from middle class families.
- The program was implemented by the classroom teachers after their training.
- The program lasted for 6 months. It started in October 2013 and ended in April 2014.
- It was implemented one day per week.

Materials

- Twenty two (22) books were read to the whole class setting.
- The criteria for selecting the books were:
 - a) the text to be interesting and attractive to the children,
 - b) the story plot to be enjoyable and appropriate for the children's age,
 - c) the story structure to be clearly presented,
 - d) the illustrations to correspond to the story events,
 - e) the story length to be appropriate for the children's age.

Before intervention program

- A book was read to the children (*Elmer the Elephant*).
- Each child retold the story in a quiet place of the kindergarten.
- Children's retellings were audiotaped and transcribed.

Intervention Program

Before story book reading

Teachers:

- Previewed the book.
- Introduced the title, the author and the illustrator.
- Discussed with children the possible content of the book
- Prompted children to make personal connections to the content of the book.

Intervention Program

During story book reading

- During story book reading there was no discussion.



Intervention Program

After story book reading

Teachers:

- Trained children in story retelling.

Training in retelling

- The retelling training program consisted of 7 phases.
 - Each phase lasted for about one month (4 sessions)

1st Phase

- All structural elements were presented to the children. The teachers explained to the children that each story has a certain structure. They explained them that in each story
 - the setting is indicated in the text
 - there is usually one main character and several others
 - there is an initial event (problem)
 - there is a series of episodes
 - there is a sequence in the story plot



2nd Phase

- Teachers asked children to retell the story by using the photocopied illustrations of the book.



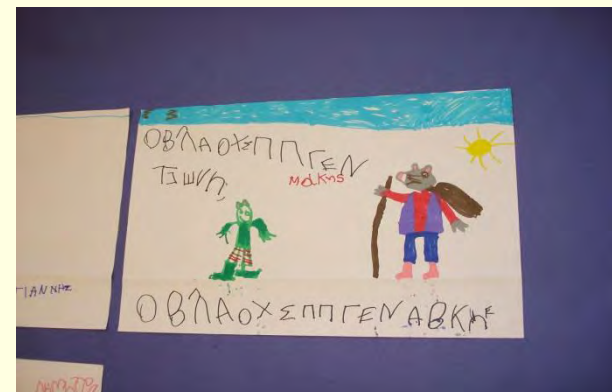
3rd Phase

- Studies have shown that when children are engaged in writing or drawing after story book reading they better understand the story plot. So children were asked to draw the story plot and they decided in pairs who will draw what.



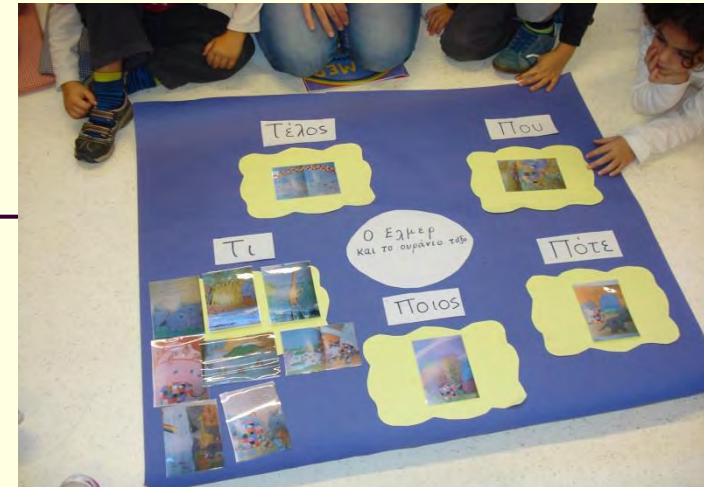
3rd Phase cont.

- Based on their drawings children retold the story and put them in sequence. This was another activity in which children were actively engaged in story retelling.



4th Phase

- After story retelling, children were asked to make the story map with the story illustrations.
- For children's better story plot understanding teachers organised the map in five parts according to the five cards which functioned as key words and reminded the children of the structural element of the story:
 - When?
 - Where?
 - Who?
 - What?
 - End



5th Phase

- After story retelling and instead of putting the story illustrations on the story map children were asked to draw the story plot on the story map and write down what they had drawn.



Πότες



Μσα φορά κε ενος κερ

Που;



Δαρος

Πολος;



αρκας ατσεαντ πα
οκ νηδερ κκ δερ πα

Τι έγινε τελικά;



Ηαρκωδα

αρκας ε τον
κινιγο

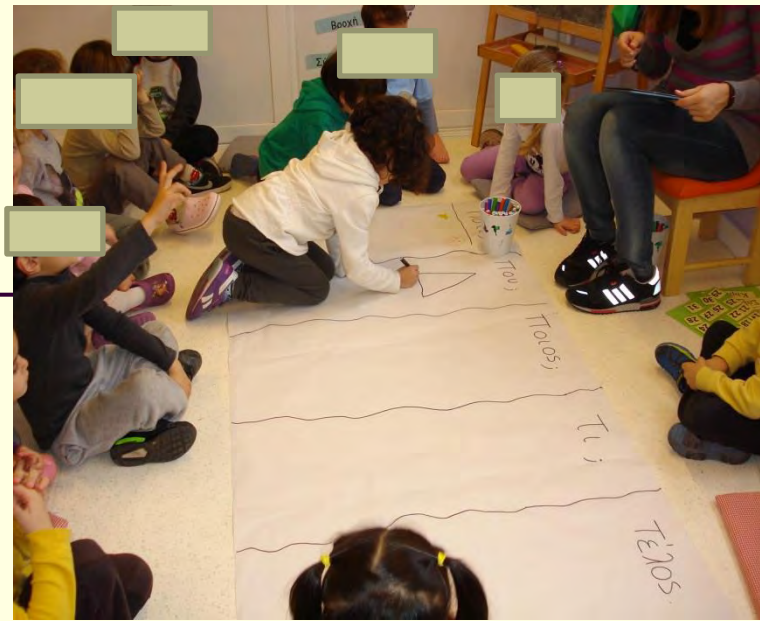
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πακοθωμε
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6th Phase

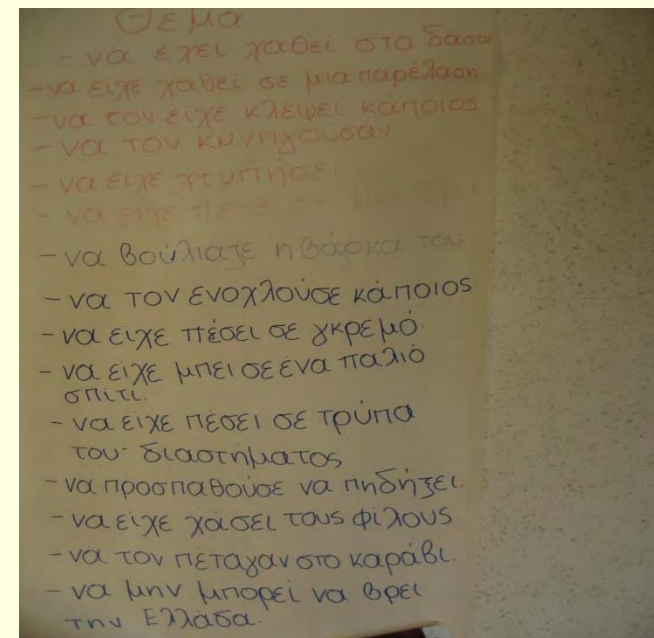
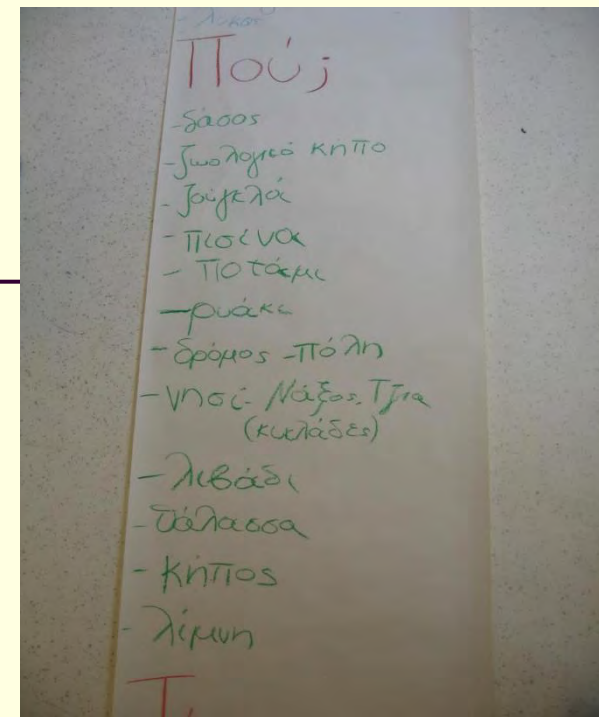
- After story retelling, teachers organised a different story map in vertical shape and asked children to draw and write the story plot in each column.





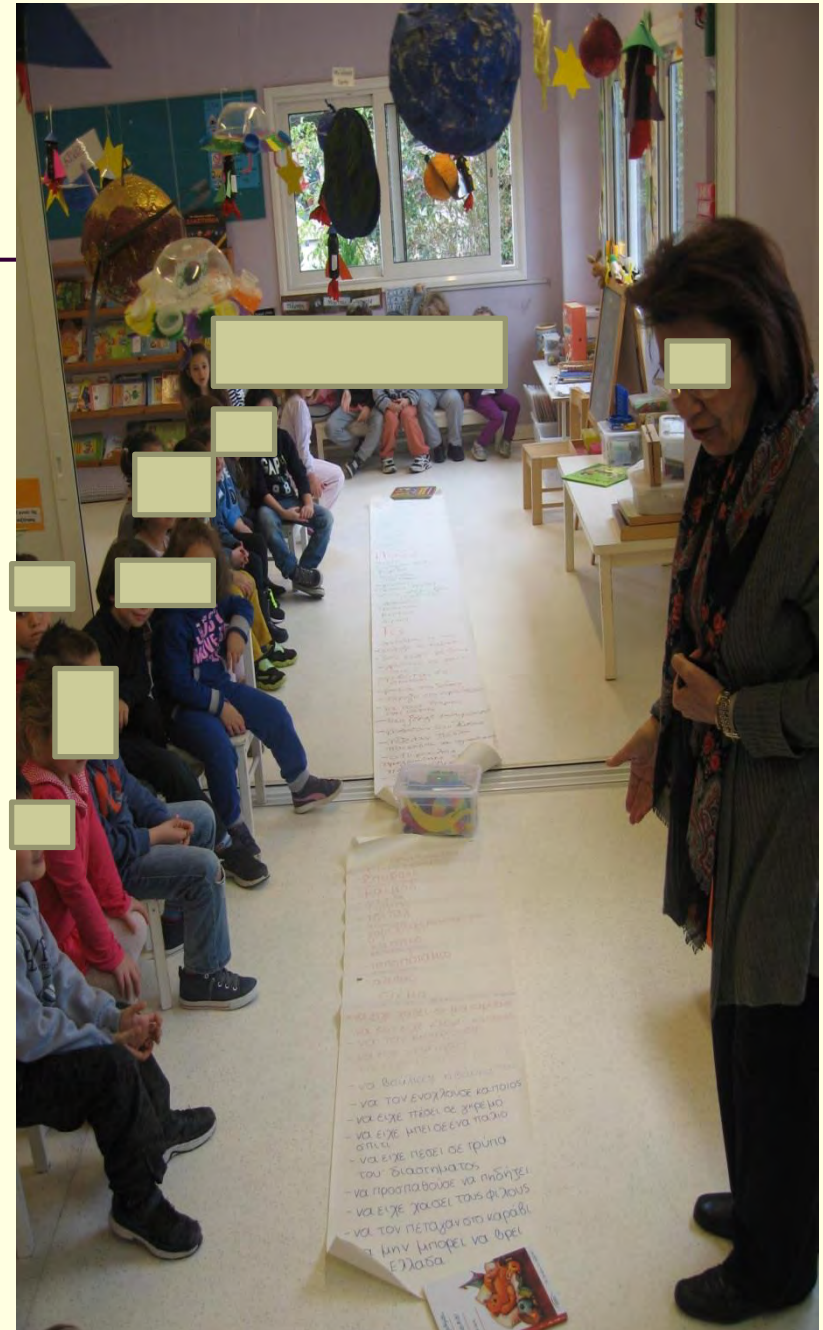
7th Phase cont.

- By the end of the intervention program children being very familiar with the stories they asked to make their own story.
- So they started to discuss with the teacher:
 - Where the story will take place?
 - Who will be the main character?
 - Which will be the character's initial problem?
- The teacher in each classroom wrote down all children's proposals.



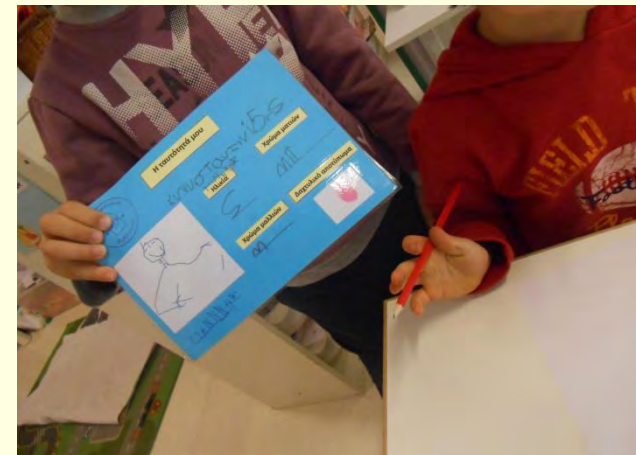
7th Phase cont.

- The children were puzzled how to make the decision.
- So one day we put down the papers on which all children's proposal were written. After discussion children decided that the choice of the main character as well as the setting of the story should be made by vote.



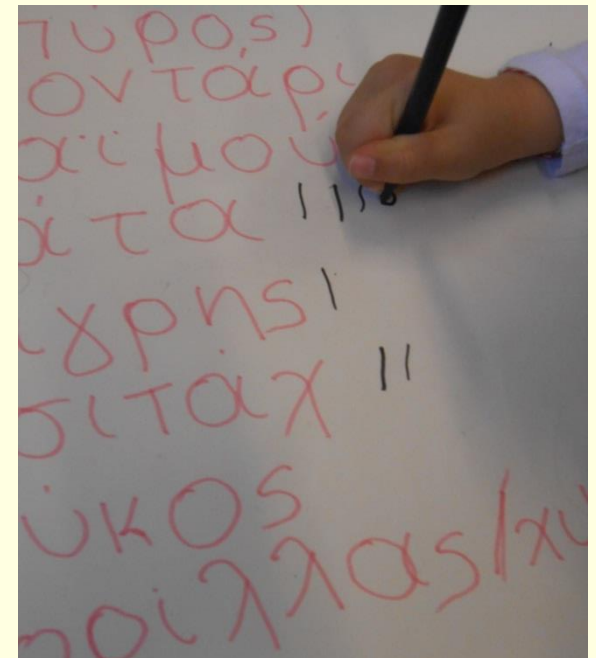
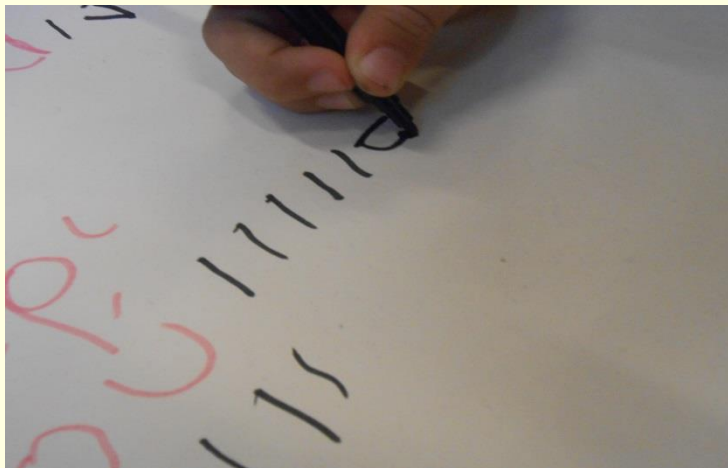
7th Phase cont.

- The polls were set up
- The children chose the Electoral Committee
- And, the vote began



7th Phase cont.

- In the one classroom the voting showed that the main character will be the **lion**, who **escaped from the zoo** because he had not friends
- While in the other classroom the main character was the naughty **monkey** who **was lost** in the jungle.



7th Phase

cont.

- The discussion started and the children with the help of the teacher created the story by specifying:
 - The setting (time, place)
 - The characters
 - The theme (problem, goal)
 - The plot episodes
 - The resolution
 - The end
- Then the children were grouped in pairs and began the story illustration.

7th Phase cont.

- When the whole work had been finished a bookbinder was invited in the kindergarten and showed to the children how a book is binding.



7th Phase

cont.

- So, the children's story books were ready and were printed in many copies.

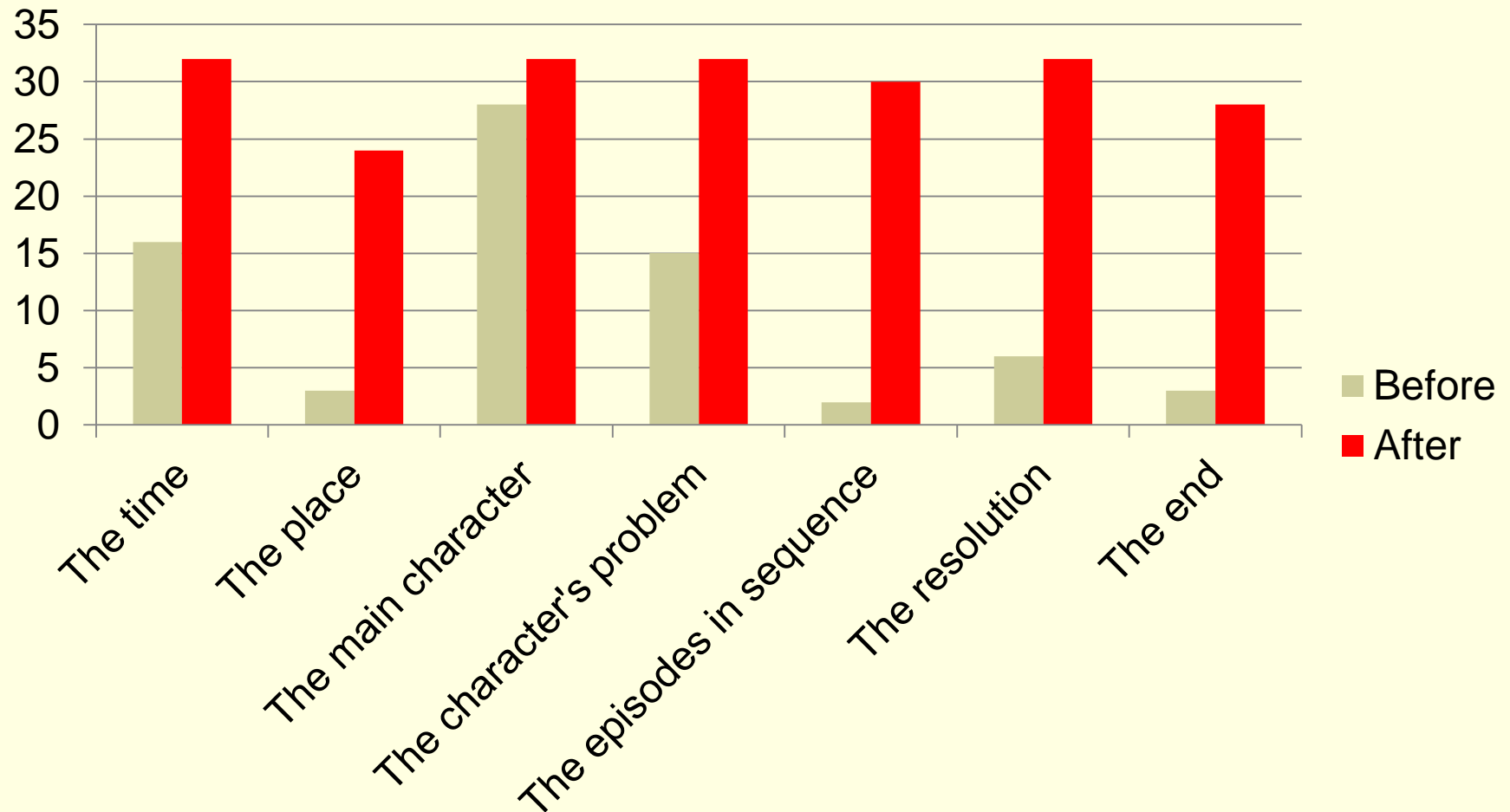


After intervention program

- A book was read to the children (*The Wolf Who Wanted to be a Chef*).
- Each child retold the story in a quiet place of the kindergarten.
- All children's retellings were audiotaped and transcribed.

Results

Children's retellings before and after the intervention program



Results

cont.

Paul's story retelling before training (*Elmer the Elephant*)

Once upon a time was Elmer that he wanted to be grey. And after he left
and found a tree with blackberries and he repainted grey and after he
came back. And after he was recognized and the others feasted.

- Paul referred
 - The time
 - The main character
 - The character's problem
 - Only one episode

Results cont.

Paul's story retelling after training (*The Wolf Who Wanted to Be Chef*)

Once upon a time there was a wolf that he liked to eat. One day he went out of his house and wanted to make a delicious chicken soup and was looking for a very little chicken. Then he walked and he saw a little hen. But then thought that if he feed her with many foods she will be more fat. Then one day he had made a hundred pancakes and left them out of the hen's door. The next day he made hundred of donuts and the third day a cake that weighed fifty kilos. Then came the day to eat the little chicken. He hit the door looked from ...(the keyhole) and saw something and then 'crack' and the door opened. Then he saw the hen. She said: 'AAA you brought all these sweets, come inside. "She said to the little chickens: "Guys! He is that brought all the sweets. He is our uncle!". And all the little chickens hugging him. And the hen said I will cook a meal for him! And they lived happily ever after.

- The setting and the main character
- The character's problem
- All the episodes in sequence
- The resolution
- The end

Conclusions

- After training in story retelling children were able to:
 - Understood the story plot.
 - Retold the setting
 - Referred the main character
 - Referred the main character's problem (the theme)
 - Retold in sequence all the story episodes and character's actions.
 - Referred the end of story.

Conclusions

- After training in story retelling **some** children:
 - Justified and commented characters' actions and reactions.
 - Dramatized their voice and were able to carry the characters' dialogues verbatim.
 - Enriched their retellings with personal comments

Conclusions

- It seems that **the use of visual aids, the drawing and writing** of story plot episodes, the children's **active involvement** in story retelling and **the repeated training** in story retelling made children able to understand the story structure and retell the story structural elements in sequence.

Conclusions

- Finally, the results showed that **the teaching strategies** implemented in the present study's training program **seems to be very effective** and helped kindergarten teachers to strengthen young children's retelling ability.

Implications

Kindergarten teachers should:

- **Involve children in discussions** after story book reading
- **Enhance children in story retellings.**
- **Use various techniques** to increase children's ability to understand the story structure and retell the story elements in sequence.
- **Engage children actively** in story retelling activities.
- **Implement frequently** story book reading and story retelling techniques in the classroom.



Thank you.

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