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English Learners and Reading Comprehension: Vocabulary Instruction

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English Learners and Reading Comprehension: Vocabulary Instruction

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By

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This action research project, written under the direction of the candidate's master's project advisory committee and approved by members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the faculty of the Kalmanovitz School of Education, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Teaching Leadership degree.

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Abstract

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English Learners struggle with reading comprehension compared to their English only peers. Research suggests that English Learners benefit from extended vocabulary lessons. This action research question investigated how extended vocabulary instruction affects reading comprehension in an ELD combination class of third, fourth, and fifth grade English Learners. A nine-week intervention was implemented that included pre-assessments, seven weeks of instruction, and post-assessments. The participants were 19 third, fourth and fifth graders in an English Language Development class consisting of five home languages. Three assessments were analyzed quantitively. Two of the assessments showed reading comprehension growth. However, one assessment demonstrated little improvement in reading comprehension. In addition, field notes were analyzed qualitatively and illustrated an increase in engagement by students and a lack of support by colleagues. Based on the triangulation of data, the intervention was a promising practice for improving EL's reading comprehension. However, the findings are not conclusive.

Dedication

This action research project is dedicated to my husband who has provided unwavering support for all my dreams.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my fellow students in the MATL program who helped make this project a reality. Your pep talks, humor, and helpful feedback kept me focused and motivated to complete this action research project. In addition, I would like to acknowledge my professors Dr. Heidimarie Rambo and Dr. Monique Lane as well as my research advisor Denise Kretzinger. Their support and guidance were crucial in the creation of this action research project.

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Introduction

Many students enter elementary classrooms learning English for the first time. These students must learn grade level standards while simultaneously learning English. Moreover, most English Learners (ELs) are in elementary school. In fact, 67% of ELs in American schools are in grades K-5 (Bialik, Scheller, & Walker, 2018). The challenge teachers face is to how best support elementary school students to learn English while teaching grade level standards.

Regretfully, the low language skills of ELs make achieving grade-level work difficult and places students at risk of dropping out later in their education (Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2011). According to the Department of Education, nationally, only 67% ELs in 2016 graduated from high school compared to 84% of their English-only peers. In addition, the Department of Education found only 9% of fourth grade ELs in the U.S. were rated proficient or above on a standardized reading test (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

Given the struggles English Learners have with reading, instructional strategies need to be focused on their learning needs. Strikingly, researchers have found that vocabulary and morphological awareness are crucial to reading comprehension for both English-only (EO) students and English Learners (Zhang & Shulley, 2017). In addition, academic vocabulary knowledge is important for predicting reading comprehension ability of ELs (Grasparil & Hernandez, 2015). Extant research indicates that focused vocabulary instruction is a promising avenue to improve reading comprehension of English Learners.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers in the United States face new challenges in teaching reading due to a growing number of students who enter the classroom speaking another language. According to the

National Center for Education Statistics, in 2016, the number of English Learners in the U.S. increased to 9.6% percent of the K-12 student population. In addition, states like California have much larger numbers of ELs with 20.2% of the student population considered EL (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Regretfully, in addition to these changing demographics, there is a nationwide achievement gap between English Learners and English-only students in reading. In 2011, the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) demonstrated reading and math scores for fourth and eighth grade ELs were considerably lower than their English-only peers. In that year, fourth grade ELs had an average score of 189.63 on the reading test compared to 221.49 for non-ELs. Similarly, eighth grade ELs scored an average of 224.75 on the reading test and non-ELs had an average score of 264.51. While eighth graders in both groups improved from fourth grade, the gap widened between the scores of ELs and non-ELs. There was a 31.86 gap in fourth grade and 39.76 gap in eighth grade, an almost 8 point increase in the achievement gap between grades. Furthermore, previous research shows that the achievement gap in these tests increased between 2005 and 2011: the fourth grade achievement gap for ELs increased by 4.79 points and the eighth grade gap for ELs increased by 9.37 points (Polat, Zarecky-Hodge, & Schreiber, 2016). In other words, the achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs has increased over time despite efforts to increase EL performance. Given the growth of the EL population in the U.S., it is alarming that the opportunity gap grows as students progress through the grades. The opportunity gap is the structural inequity in our society and schools that denies all students the same opportunity to achievement (da Silva, et al., 2007). Students with limited material resources, English Learners, and students of color are typically denied equal access to qualified teachers, high-achieving schools, and adequate school funding.

Demographic changes at the national level are reflected in my current district, a large and diverse suburban district whose largest student group is 41.7% Latinx. According to the Department of Education, the enrollment in the district was 31,809 in 2015. The Civil Rights Data Collection by the Department of Education for that year described 23% of the students as English Learners (Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2016). The district has tried to address the changing population with strategies such as English language development (ELD) classes, before and after school interventions, and training for teachers.

Despite these efforts, inequity remains in my district. There are very different outcomes for students who are not English proficient compared to their English-only peers. For example, even though 23% of the population is EL, only 1.1% of high school students who took the SAT or ACT were ELs. Similarly, of the students who took calculus in the district, only 2% were designated as EL. In addition, only 2.3% of the students who took at least one AP course were classified as EL (Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2016).

At my current site, a suburban middle-class elementary school, students struggle to exit English Learner (EL) designation. Last year out of 115 students, only 23 students became reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP) as a result of passing the ELPAC exam, maintaining good grades, and having adequate IReady test scores. I currently teach one period of ELD 40 minutes, four times a week to a combination class of 19 third, fourth, and fifth grade students. Strikingly, the students speak five different home languages and demonstrate different levels of English proficiency.[1]

Moreover, as a teacher of ELD, I have found English Learners struggle with reading comprehension. Students are often confused by passages due to their lack of word knowledge. Much of the research in reading instruction for ELs demonstrates the need for vocabulary

[1] The English proficiency levels of the class were emerging, expanding, and bridging.

instruction to improve reading comprehension (August, et al., 2018; Scott, 2015; Wessels, 2011). In the past, I have tried embedding vocabulary instruction into short passages by quickly mentioning the definitions in context in order to help teach reading comprehension to ELs, but I have found this method insufficient to my students' needs.

I am interested in trying to teach extended vocabulary lessons to improve reading comprehension. Research has found that effective strategies that support vocabulary instruction include collaboration, pre-teaching, reading words in context, discussions and study guides (August et al., 2018; Chung, 2012; Scott, 2015). I wondered if teaching extended vocabulary lessons would improve reading comprehension of ELs.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this project was to improve reading scores through vocabulary instruction. In order to improve reading scores and exit students from EL status, reading instruction must improve. Reading comprehension for ELs hinges on vocabulary development. Researchers have found that vocabulary improvement leads to acceleration of reading comprehension (Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaus, 2011; Scott, 2015; Wessels, 2011). Some vocabulary acquisition strategies are more effective than others. While embedded vocabulary lessons that are folded into other lessons have shown reading comprehension gains, extended vocabulary lessons lead to even greater improvements in reading (August, Artzi, Barr, & Francis, 2018). For instance, August and colleagues (2018) investigated the effectiveness of teaching ELs embedded vocabulary instruction versus extended vocabulary instruction. The researchers discovered extended vocabulary lessons led to greater gains in word knowledge and reading comprehension for ELs, especially combined with collaborative work and self-monitoring.

Extended lessons are typified by longer instruction and may include picture cards, collaborative activities, discussions of words in context, and reviewing words taught.

Therefore, to challenge the reading gap between English Learners and their English-only peers, I wondered if a focus on vocabulary instruction during my English Development class (ELD) would lead to better reading comprehension. In the past, my vocabulary instruction during ELD was short and embedded into reading passages. By focusing on extended vocabulary lessons, my hope was students would learn more words and would better understand written text. Specifically, through vocabulary lessons that used pre-teaching, collaboration, discussions, and review, students may be able to retain more words into their vocabulary knowledge. Both August and colleagues (2018) and Overturf and colleagues (2013) demonstrated success using these strategies with ELs and diverse students with limited material resources. I hoped that these vocabulary lessons would lead to word knowledge that translated into a better understanding of what students read. Moreover, my aim was for the learners' reading scores to improve.

Action Research Question

The question guiding this research was: *How does extended vocabulary instruction affect reading comprehension in an ELD combination class of third, fourth, and fifth grade English Learners?* Specifically, I wondered if extended vocabulary lessons that included collaboration, pre-teaching words, reading words in context, study guides and discussions would improve reading comprehension scores? The expectation was that six weeks of extended vocabulary instruction that emphasized collaboration would improve overall reading comprehension in ELs by teaching words essential to understanding texts across disciplines. In addition, students would attain skills to learn unfamiliar words necessary to understanding what they read. It was my hope

that students would gain vocabulary knowledge that would improve their reading comprehension and would establish a foundation for success in school.

Limitations

Due to my overlapping roles as a teacher and researcher, this inquiry had many limitations. For example, acting as both the students' teacher and researcher created a challenge in objectivity. Similarly, the inherit power dynamics of teacher and student undoubtedly had an effect on the research due to the fact I wasn't an objective observer. Instead, I was their teacher who wanted each individual to succeed. In addition, the number of participants was limited by the number of students in my ELD class. Moreover, the challenges of having three grade levels and five home languages potentially limited the transferability of the results to other teaching settings and populations of students. The study was also limited in time duration. Because of the expectations of my graduate program, the data collection period was limited to nine weeks and may not have been enough time to render the most accurate results.

Positionality of the Researcher

As an ELD teacher, I have had the opportunity to work with students from many cultures and home languages. This experience has enhanced my practice as a teacher as well as given me a better understanding of cultures different than my own. For example, last year, two Afghani sisters in my ELD class shared that their family moved to the United States in part to ensure they would receive an education. Unfortunately, many girls from their home country are denied the right to even learn how to read. According to a 2003 report by the U.S. Congress, the overall female literacy rate in Afghanistan was three to four percent (Alvi-Aziz, 2008). Hearing stories like theirs made me aware of my own unique place in the world and how my privilege might color my objectivity as a teacher researcher.

Unlike the Afghani sisters, I knew at a young age I would have opportunities to get a great education. As a child from a white upper middle-class American family, I was encouraged to dream about college at a young age. With the exception of kindergarten and first grade where I attended a primarily African American elementary school, most of my schooling was with students who looked like me and were from a similar economic background. This was in contrast to my ELD students, most of whom had limited material resources and were recent immigrants or were the children of immigrants.

Similarly, while growing up, my exposure to students from other countries was limited. However, I was fortunate to attend a magnet public high school whose emphasis was on foreign languages and cultures, and I had friends from Japan and Brazil who were exchange students learning English. I also had the opportunity as an adult to be emerged in another language without speaking it, surrounded by those who knew no English, when I attended a wedding in an isolated village in Italy and tried to figure out simple things like ordering breakfast or a bus schedule. However, these experiences provided only limited understanding about the struggles of the students in my class who speak a different language at home and struggle to learn English. As a researcher, I tried to better understand their unique position in school and society by providing opportunities for the students to share their stories and by simply listening.

In addition to having different life experiences than my students, I have authority as the teacher. This created a dynamic that has me in a position of power over my students. While conducting this research, I attempted to be sensitive to this power dynamic by respecting students and creating a climate of respect and safety so students could express their thoughts and concerns. Despite these attempts, the nature of being a teacher researcher places me at the top of the power hierarchy compared to my students.

Working with students different than myself enhances my understanding of teaching and my role as a teacher-researcher. Throughout the research process, I tried to be sensitive to differences, my unique position in the world, and the inherent power inequities between students and teachers. While these challenges exist, I attempted to be objective and aware of my positionality as a teacher researcher. To limit researcher bias, I constructed the data triangulation of IReady test scores, Running Records, and a multiple-choice reading comprehension test using ELPAC released questions.

Definitions of Terms

English language development (ELD). Instruction of English Learners that is focused on literacy and language. It includes reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use across all disciplines (California Department of Education, 2012).

Embedded vocabulary lessons. These are short lessons that teach vocabulary in the context of a reading selection (August, Artiz, Barr, & Francis, 2018).

Extended vocabulary lessons. These vocabulary lessons include pre-teaching words, collaborative work, and review (August, Artiz, Barr, & Francis, 2018).

Tier 1 vocabulary words. Basic words that don't require instruction, such as *mother, go,* and *stop* (Beck & McKeown, 1985.)

Tier 3 vocabulary words. Words that are content specific and low frequency. Examples are *tidal pool, electromagnet,* and *igneous intrusion* (Beck & McKeown, 1985.)

Tier 2 vocabulary words. These are high frequency words used by mature language users across disciplines and includes words like *convenient, ponder,* and *unique* (Beck & McKeown, 1985.)

Vocabulary knowledge. There is a continuum from zero knowledge of a word, or trace understanding to fluent understanding of word. Aim of instruction is deeper knowledge of words in order to understand what is read (Beck & McKeown, 1985.)

Words correct per minute (WCPM). Timed oral reading fluency test administered by listening to a student read aloud a passage and recording their errors (Grasparil & Hernandez, 2015).

Implications

The goal of this research was to improve outcomes for ELs and to reduce the achievement and opportunity gaps between ELs and their English-only peers. By focusing on extended vocabulary instruction, my hope was that students would improve their reading comprehension. Improved reading comprehension will likely have improved outcomes for all subject areas. If successful, the implications of this research may apply to teachers and researchers interested in improving reading comprehension for ELs by focusing on vocabulary instruction. The research could guide others to assess if these strategies were applicable to other grade levels.

Within my own school site, the implication for other teachers to demonstrate how vocabulary instruction may lead to improved student achievement of ELs and possibly other groups. Other ELD teachers may want to try some of the strategies implemented in this intervention. In addition, general education teachers may decide to include extended vocabulary lessons in their own teaching plans in order to improve the reading comprehension of all students. A possible action research project could explore using these strategies in a general education classroom to see if there is improvement in ELs' content-area reading as well as other

students struggling with reading comprehension. Extended vocabulary lessons may help ELs achieve success in reading and lessen the achievement gap in reading scores.

Chapter II

Literature Review

The purpose of this action research project was to examine how extended vocabulary instruction will affect the reading comprehension scores of a combination class of third, fourth and fifth grade English Learners. I chose to focus on vocabulary instruction to improve students' word knowledge in order to improve reading comprehension in all content areas.

Regretfully, English Learners' (EL) reading scores are statistically below their English only (EO) peers, in turn, creating an achievement gap. Specifically, the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading assessment demonstrated an achievement gap for EL fourth graders compared to their monolingual peers. English only students averaged a just below proficient ranking and English Learners averaged a below basic ranking (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Additionally, the same assessment demonstrated that the achievement gap continues to grow into eighth grade.

Strikingly, although educators have made efforts to improve EL reading comprehension scores, an achievement gap remains. To address this inequity, EL reading instruction is in need of improvement. Research supports that teaching vocabulary accelerates gains in reading comprehension for ELs (Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaus, 2011; Scott, 2015; Wessels, 2011). Given the research in EL reading comprehension, the action research question for this study was: *How does extended instruction of vocabulary affect reading comprehension in an ELD combination class of third, fourth, and fifth grade English Learners?*

Overview of the Literature Review

The literature review begins with the theoretical rationale in which I examined the writings of Geneva Gay and L.S. Vygotsky. Their works are the theoretical underpinnings of my

action research study. Vygotsky (1978) examined how students construct knowledge through communication with others. In fact, in order to reach a student's learning potential, learning must be done in a social context. Similarly, Gay (2000) wrote that students learn within the social construct of culture. She also examined the need for instruction to be mindful of the unique differences in a student's home culture, which may not match the culture of school.

Next, the review of related research included three main areas of study: reading instruction for English Learners, vocabulary instruction, and embedded vocabulary lessons in contrast to extended vocabulary lessons. The research reviewed begins by looking at the ways in which English Learners have unique challenges with reading comprehension compared to English only students. This research led to identifying the importance of vocabulary instruction for ELs and the relevance of thoughtful word choice and engaging lessons. Similarly, the research on vocabulary instruction for ELs prompted examining the importance of extended vocabulary instruction for ELs as opposed to embedded instruction of vocabulary. Research articles used for this review were found primarily in Education Source, ERIC, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. The following terms were used in my research for this project: *effective vocabulary instruction, English Learners, reading comprehension, vocabulary, vocabulary acquisition, achievement gap, extended vocabulary, and EL reading scores, etc.*

Theoretical Rationale

This research project was developed using the theoretical works of L.S. Vygotsky and Geneva Gay to develop a promising practice to promote vocabulary and reading comprehension for English Learners. My focus was to address the inequity in English Learners' performance in reading comprehension compared to English only students. Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development is key in understanding how children achieve higher knowledge with the

support of their peers. Vygotsky argued that students develop knowledge by actively engaging with the content and through discussions with others. Mindful of his theory, my intervention included cooperative learning and challenging tasks.

Enriching Vygotsky's lens, Gay contends that student learning is tied to culture. Gay's work on culturally responsive instruction was instrumental in developing effective language lessons sensitive to the different perspectives and ways of learning inherit in a highly diverse classroom. Moreover, both theorists assert that acquiring new knowledge is fundamentally reliant on social interactions, and both were pivotal in understanding how to teach vocabulary as effectively as possible with the goal of improving reading comprehension for ELs.

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. L.S. Vygotsky developed a theory of learning which argued that children solve problems and meet their intellectual potential through communication and interactions with others. According to Vygotsky (1978), the zone of proximal development is the gap between what students are able to learn on their own and the higher achievement they can achieve through social interactions with others. In addition, he stated that in order to reach their potential development, children must construct knowledge in a social context (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky noted, "learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.90). Hence, students learn at their higher potential through having discussions and working cooperatively with other students. In addition, Vygotsky expressed schools should ask difficult tasks of students in order for them to reach their maximum learning outcomes (Vygotsky & Kozuilin, 2011).

Interestedly, Vygotsky described that communication itself helps younger children solve problems. He observed that young children will talk to themselves and others in order to solve a

complex problem. Through speech, children problem-solve and create a plan. In fact, Vygotsky proposed that some problems would be unsolvable to a child without the use of speech (Vygotsky, 1978). Collaboration and communication enable children to solve more complex problems than they would accomplish on their own.

Vygotsky's theory also placed an emphasis on how social interactions and culture are essential to childhood development. Through communication and collaboration, students construct knowledge that they would not be able to access on their own. In fact, he states that learning is social in nature and "children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.88). In order for children to develop to their highest potential, they must interact with others through dialogue.

Another concept with classroom implications is Vygotsky's argument that higher thinking is dependent on social interactions. He argued that before higher level thinking can be internalized, first there must be social interaction to develop it. In fact, he stated that higher-level thinking develops first in a social context that later leads to an internal understanding. Moreover, Vygotsky argued social interactions lead to higher intellectual development (Vygotsky, 2017). Applying this theory to a classroom setting, students must work together and discuss difficult problems in order to achieve more complex thought processes.

Furthermore, Vygotsky observed that teaching itself facilitated a student's development that would otherwise not occur on its own (Vygotsky, 2017). Through classroom interactions, students achieve more than they would without intervention. In developing lessons, I was mindful of the concept of the zone of proximal development by including cooperative learning, discussions, and providing challenging tasks for students.

Gay's culturally responsive teaching. Geneva Gay's theory of culturally responsive teaching builds upon the notion that learning is a social act and adds the complexity of how culture influences communication and ways of learning. Moreover, she asserted that by acknowledging and building upon different cultures and experiences, schools will promote academic achievement of historically underserved students (Gay, 2000). Gay describes culture as "multidimensional and continually changing" yet within ethnic groups there are some "core cultural features and focal values" (Gay, 2000, p.10.) It is important to note culturally responsive teaching is different from multiculturalism in that multiculturalism tends to focus on celebrating different cultures while culturally responsive teaching is centered on teaching itself. Culturally responsive teaching is complex and includes caring, the importance of communication, diverse curriculum, emphasis on learning styles, and cooperative learning (Gay 2000). In addition, Gay notes that ways of learning and communicating varies from culture to culture and states that, "communication is also indispensable to facilitating knowing and assessing knowledge" (Gay, 2000, p.80). Notably, this theorist's emphasis on communication as a way to learn and gain knowledge echoes Vygotsky's stance that learning has a social component. However, Gay stresses that there are differences among cultures in how students communicate and learn (Gay, 2000). These cultural differences have implications for instruction.

Moreover, Gay challenges the notion that a white middle class perspective on teaching and learning is universal even though many educators in the United States assume it is. The current approach to teaching and learning in most classrooms is biased toward white middle class students. In contrast, Gay argues that communication and learning styles vary from one culture to the next (Gay, 2000). Likewise, Gay argues teaching should focus on the ways diverse children learn and "teaching diverse students through their own cultural filters" (Gay, 2013, p.50). In

addition, Gay stresses the need for students to develop multi-cultural competencies. In her opinion, students need to learn not only about their own culture but also other cultures since what they currently know may be filtered from the larger society with biases and stereotypes (Gay, 2015).

Furthermore, Gay advocates for high expectations for all students. In fact, Gay argues that teacher expectations can affect academic outcomes. She also states that expectations are often tied to a teacher's bias towards different cultures and racial groups. For example, she states that many teachers' interactions with African American students often focus on discipline and getting students to conform to a white middle class cultural behavior standard rather than on learning. Similarly, teachers may misinterpret behaviors of recent immigrants from some Asian countries who have a different cultural expectation of teacher and student interactions. Unfortunately, teachers may mistakenly consider these students too quiet and give up on getting students to participate in classroom discussions and cooperative groups (Gay, 2000). Regretfully, teacher bias can lead to lower academic expectations, which in turn leads to lower performance.

In addition to high expectations, a part of culturally responsive teaching is creating an ethos of caring. In order to achieve meaningful caring, Gay advocates for teachers to acquire an understanding of the diversity among their student population, understand their own cultural background and potential biases, and discuss cultural diversity with others (Gay, 2000). By becoming aware of cultural differences, teachers are better able to help students achieve. Gay's work was essential in creating lessons that would address the learning styles of the many different cultures represented in my ELD class.

Similarly, Gay emphasizes that communication and culture are intertwined. The ways in which people communicate is tied to culture. Gay argues students who are not a part of white

middle class culture are often misunderstood and discounted by American teachers since their communication style is different. She states further that teachers may not recognize student understanding and achievement due to a mismatch of communication styles. Likewise, similar to Vygotsky, Gay states communication is essential to learning (Gay, 2000). The challenge for teachers is to include dialogue and cooperative learning while being aware of the different ways in which students from various cultural backgrounds communicate.

Since vocabulary and reading comprehension tasks are rooted in language, the works of Gay and Vygotsky informed my research. Both theorists stressed the social component of learning and the importance of communication. Their theories were essential in creating an intervention to address the inequity in English Learners' reading scores compared to English only students. In developing extended vocabulary lessons to improve reading comprehension, I placed an emphasis on challenging tasks, cooperative learning, and an awareness that both communication and learning are influenced by culture.

Review of Related Research

Reading instruction for English Learners. In this section, the research focused on examining the differences in reading comprehension for English Learners. First, the research examined common reading problems of English Learners and English only students. Next, the research investigated effective reading comprehension strategies for English Learners.

Common reading problems among English Learners and English only students. Educational researchers Zhang and Shulley (2017) wondered if readers with poor reading comprehension were different from typical readers. These researchers had three questions in their study. First, they questioned if readers struggling in reading comprehension were different from typical readers in their use of morphological analysis to figure out unknown words. Second,

researchers questioned if there was a difference in reading comprehension skills between English only students and English Learners. The third question was if it is possible to identify readers struggling in reading comprehension by looking at vocabulary, morphological awareness, or incidental word learning.

Interestingly, the study was a quantitative design that looked at 37 poor readers and 44 typical readers. The students were fourth and fifth graders from the southern U.S. Zhang and Shulley (2017) used multiple measures that looked at reading comprehension, word understanding, and short-term and working memory. While they were limited by their sample size, multiple forms of data were used to analyze their research questions. For example, students were given a series of standardized tests that were an assessment of reading comprehension, silent word fluency, oral sequencing for working memory, multiple choice vocabulary tests, cloze reading tests, incidental word learning, morphological awareness, suffix choice, and compound production (Zhang & Shulley, 2017).

The findings suggest that a lack of word knowledge is an indicator of a poor reading comprehension regardless of home language. In addition, the study underscores the need for vocabulary instruction in order to improve reading comprehension. Hence, it supports other studies that emphasize the need to include vocabulary in reading instruction (Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaus, 2011; Scott, 2015: Wessels, 2011). This research also demonstrated that English only students are hampered by poor vocabulary when it comes to reading comprehension as well. Similarly, it also stated the need for morphological awareness (understanding how words can be broken into units of meaning), and incidental word learning (the unintentional learning of words from exposure in reading and listening).

In a related study, Vaughn and colleagues (2019) compared fourth grade English Learners to English only students who had reading difficulties. The researchers examined the connections between listening comprehension, word reading, and reading comprehension. The study included 400 students with 183 non-ELs, and 217 ELs. All students received intensive reading intervention for 16 weeks in order to improve reading comprehension. The focus of the intervention was listening comprehension and word reading in order to improve reading comprehension. The students came from 17 schools located in the Southwestern United States.

This research demonstrated that there was a difference in pre-intervention skills *and* outcomes between ELs and non-ELs. Results showed that both groups of students who had higher listening comprehension scores compared to word reading skills performed differently on reading comprehension with ELs having higher reading comprehension scores (Vaughn et al., 2019). Interestedly, the group of students who had higher word reading skills and lower listening comprehension scores also had different outcomes with non-ELs having higher scores on reading comprehension than ELs. In addition, the researchers found that although reading comprehension improved overall for both groups, all students still had reading scores that remained well below average after the intervention (Vaughn et al., 2019). Based on these findings, there appears to be differences in how ELs and non-ELs acquire reading comprehension skills. Similarly, the approach of listening comprehension and word reading interventions may not lead to the highest reading comprehension gains since both groups were still significantly below average after the intervention. As a result, this study had implications for my action research project since I taught reading comprehension to English Learners who were all below grade level in reading based on a district assessment taken at the start of the academic year.

The two studies examined in this subsection demonstrated the need for vocabulary and word work to boost reading comprehension. Vaughn and colleagues (2019) found differences between English Learners and monolinguals in identifying strengths for learning reading comprehension. In contrast, Zhang and Shulley (2017) found poor vocabulary knowledge hampered reading comprehension in both groups. Regardless of their methodological differences, both studies emphasized the need to focus on word knowledge in order to improve reading comprehension.

Effective reading comprehension strategies for English Learners. In this subsection, the research is focused specifically on the challenges to English learner reading comprehension. Grasparil and Hernandez (2015) wondered if oral reading fluency, English language proficiency, or academic vocabulary knowledge was the best predictor of proficient reading comprehension for ELs. In addition, the researchers also wondered if the best measure of reading comprehension for ELs was different compared to English only (EO) students. This quantitative study examined 1,376 Latinx EL 3rd graders from one school district that included 23 elementary schools. These researchers used common assessments in California to analyze indicators of success for Latinx ELs in reading comprehension. The study used the tests CELDT (California English Language Development Test), CST (California Standards Test), and CAT6 (California Achievement Test 6th edition).

Grasparil and Hernandez (2015) found that academic vocabulary knowledge was the best indicator of reading comprehension in Latinx ELs. This finding opposes research that suggests the best indicator for EOs in reading comprehension in elementary school is oral reading fluency (Kang & Shin, 2019; Tighe & Schatshneider, 2014). The authors concluded that instruction to improve reading comprehension for Latinx ELs must go beyond decoding and fast oral reading

(Grasparil & Hernandez, 2015). While this study supports my line of research, the findings may not apply to all students in my study since I will be teaching students from many home languages.

In a similar study, O'Day (2009) wondered if the reading comprehension strategies that are effective for monolinguals were also effective for ELs. The study was mixed methods and O'Day examined test data, classroom observations, teacher professional development around literacy, demographics, teacher interviews, and instruction models. O'Day (2009) looked at nine elementary schools whose EL populations varied from 25 to 80 percent of the student population. Schools were in the city of San Diego, and the two classrooms to observe at each school site were selected by random.

O'Day (2009) found that classroom discussions were more effective in supporting ELs with reading comprehension than non-EL students. In addition, teacher modeling of reading comprehension strategies was more effective with EL students than EOs. However, this researcher found in general, that no consistent instructional guidelines for literacy were employed for ELs at the school sites. Instead, students were taught to read in a similar manner as their English-only peers. Due to her research results, O'Day (2009) concluded that ELs required literacy instruction tailored to their needs. Although the researcher looked at literacy from many angles, findings were based heavily on the researcher's analysis and interviews with teachers, literacy coaches, and principals and could be biased based on prior conceptions of what works in reading comprehension. Since the study tried to look at reading comprehension from so many perspectives, the research lacked focus. However, this study is helpful in my line of research by exploring whether or not EL students need different instruction than EOs in order to most effectively improve reading comprehension. Perhaps one of the conclusions suggested by this

research is that the gap between EOs and ELs may be due in part to the fact that ELs need different instruction than they are currently receiving.

Both studies reviewed in this subsection emphasized the importance of ELs having different learning needs than non-ELs. The opportunity gap in reading may in part be explained by O'Day's (2009) finding that ELs are generally given the same types of reading instruction as non-ELs. Similarly, Grasparil and Hernandez (2015) found ELs needed more vocabulary instruction in order to improve reading comprehension. These studies help support my action research project by showing the need for vocabulary instruction as well as demonstrating ELs may need a different approach to reading comprehension than instruction that is typically given to non-ELs.

Vocabulary instruction. This section examined the research on best practices for vocabulary instruction in order to improve reading comprehension. First, the research focused on what vocabulary words to teach. This is followed by a section of research that discusses the importance of creating engaging vocabulary lessons. Lastly, the research related to embedded vocabulary instruction versus extended vocabulary instruction is reviewed.

Choice of vocabulary words. In this subsection, the research discussed focused on strategically selecting vocabulary words. Beck and McKeown's (2002) work on vocabulary instruction is very influential and is frequently referenced in research focused on vocabulary acquisition. Although it is more of a guide for instruction instead of empirical research, it does provide insight into which words to teach that are most useful and have the most application across subjects.

Beck and McKeown (2002) created a three-tier system for teachers to examine which vocabulary should be taught. In developing this system, the authors examined research that

supported the need for vocabulary instruction. These authors noted high achievers have far greater vocabularies than their struggling peers. The researchers also commented on how infrequently vocabulary is taught in a systematic and meaningful way. Beck and McKeown (2002) created a three-tier system to identify which words are the most vital to include in vocabulary instruction.

The practical significance of Beck and McKeown's (2002) research is that it helps teachers target words to teach that will have the greatest impact on learning across subjects. It describes Tier 1 words as basic words that rarely require instruction. For example, *clock* is a Tier 1 word. In contrast, Tier 2 words are useful and are often used by sophisticated students such as use of the word *coincidence*. Tier 3 words are specific to a narrow focus of study. An example of a Tier 3 word is *peninsula*. The authors argue that teachers should spend most instructional time focused on Tier 2 words due to their usefulness across subjects (Beck & McKeown, 2002). Their theory is often referenced since it helps teachers determine where to put their instructional energy. This work benefited my intervention by helping me focus on choosing words that will have the best chance of improving reading comprehension.

Engaging vocabulary lessons. In this subsection, research that focuses on engaging and effective vocabulary lessons is examined. For example, Scott (2015) explored the question, *how do you create engaging and meaningful vocabulary instruction that improves student success in school?* In particular, Scott (2015) wondered if engaging vocabulary lessons with a focus on word consciousness would lead to better literacy and word knowledge. It was a qualitative study that looked at test data, journals, and interviews. The subjects were teachers and students from 19 elementary schools and focused on fourth and fifth grade.

Scott (2015) found students who were in the study out–performed students who were not part of the study on a vocabulary test. Students also improved in reading. As a result, the researcher suggests teachers get training on engaging vocabulary instruction to improve literacy (Scott, 2015). Scott's article helped me understand the inequity of word knowledge between EOs and ELs in the classroom. It also solidified my understanding of the need to focus on vocabulary and engagement when teaching reading to ELs.

Another influential work to my study was Overturf and colleagues (2013) **Word Nerds: Teaching All Student to Learn and Love Vocabulary.** It examined ways to teach vocabulary to diverse students who have limited material resources (Overturf, Montgomery, & Smith, 2013). The book begins with an overview of research in the field of vocabulary instruction that compliments other research I have read. However, the authors focus on research that examines the word gap based on socio-economic status instead of EL designation. In fact, the authors state that access to limited material resources is a larger indicator of limited vocabulary rather than "race, urban versus rural community, limited English proficiency, and language impairments," (Overturf, Montgomery, & Smith, 2013, p.9). The authors also state that in addition to learning new words, students with limited material resources need to learn new concepts to understand some of the vocabulary. Although the writing did not focus on ELs exclusively, it did provide insight into developing engaging lessons.

The book provides teachers with lessons tied to research to better improve vocabulary for students. The authors weave lesson ideas with research to back their instructional guidelines. While not typical research, the authors monitored success of the program with observation and analysis of standardized test scores. The lessons are easy to understand and include engagement,

rigor, high-level discussions, and collaboration. The authors also argue that vocabulary instruction supports other subjects and reading comprehension.

Another researcher who focused on engaging vocabulary lessons, Shintani (2012), wondered if the use of input-based tasks that focused on natural conversation of listening followed by a language activity would lead to vocabulary and grammar growth. The design was quasi-experimental with one control group. It consisted of only 30 Japanese students aged six with no experience with English attending a private language school in New Zealand. The experiment lasted five weeks while the researcher taught lessons and gave six tests. The teacher researcher gave commands and the students were directed to follow the instructions using picture cards. Students were not asked to respond in English (Shintani, 2012). Shintani found that although students were not required to produce speech, they often did speak English to ask questions about the task. Interestingly, this researcher wanted to ensure that students were in control of their production of oral language in English. Strikingly, students in the intervention performed better than the control group.

Moreover, Shintani (2012) theorized that the focus on task allowed students to acquire vocabulary in a low stress manner. The flaws in the study are due in part to the small sample size. The study is linked to my study in that it is written by a teacher researcher conducting a similar area of research. However, the students themselves are a different age and more limited in their English.

The researchers in this subsection focused on providing engaging vocabulary lessons in order to improve English acquisition and reading comprehension. While Shintani (2012) had a small sample size, her project emphasized engagement and provided me an understanding to the potential outreach of a teacher researcher. Scott's (2015) research demonstrated that engaging

vocabulary lessons could lead to reading comprehension. Similarly, Overturf and colleagues (2013) emphasized engagement in providing practical lessons for the elementary school teacher. These studies' vocabulary lessons that drew on student engagement informed my research.

Embedded vocabulary lessons versus extended vocabulary lessons. In this section researchers examined best practices for teaching vocabulary. For example, researchers August and colleagues (2018) wondered if the type of vocabulary instruction mattered. In addition, the researchers considered the question if extended vocabulary instruction was better than embedded instruction. They also looked at word type and vocabulary acquisition and wanted to see if the type of instruction of vocabulary would have a positive outcome on word retention and reading comprehension. The research design was a within subjects mixed research design. The participants were 187 second-grade Spanish-speaking ELs from 10 classrooms and nine teachers. To collect data, the researchers conducted a survey of the teachers' instructional experience, mentor teachers observed instructors and completed a five-point Likert scale to evaluate the teachers' skill in delivering vocabulary instruction in English and Spanish, and reading and word tests were given to students in English and Spanish. They found that both embedded and extended vocabulary instruction led to better word understanding. However, the researchers found extended instruction as more effective (August, Artzi, Barr, & Francis, 2018).

August and colleagues (2018) concluded since vocabulary instruction was effective, it may need to extend to more of the school day in order for ELs to overcome the word knowledge gap. The study was very helpful in developing my own intervention and research. As a result of this research, I created extended vocabulary lessons for my intervention. It is important to note there are limitations in this study for my practice since my student population is different. I will

be teaching multiple grades levels and students with more than one home language. However, I anticipate that extended vocabulary lessons will be effective for this student population as well.

Similarly, Jozwik and Douglas (2017) found intensive vocabulary instruction effective. Although the researchers wanted to know if intensive vocabulary instruction would improve the oral reading and defining of words by EL students with learning difficulties, it is instructive to my research since a high proportion of my EL students have learning difficulties within my ELD class. The researchers examined the outcomes of multicomponent academic vocabulary instruction on oral reading and understanding of academic vocabulary words. They also assessed students in one month, three months, and six-month time frames to see if information was retained. In addition, researchers were interested to see the students' perceptions of the instruction (Jozwik & Douglas, 2017).

This mixed-method study included tests, student work, interviews and observations as data gathering strategies. The students were six fifth graders with learning disabilities who were Mexican American and spoke Spanish at home. Although limited by a small sample size, researchers found students retained academic vocabulary over time. The research design draws on research that shows the need ELs have for vocabulary instruction as well as the achievement gap ELs have compared to EOs. Their study also draws upon research that supports explicit vocabulary instruction as opposed to relying on context alone to build word knowledge. In addition, this study discusses research that supports self-regulation/monitoring for struggling students and the strength of cooperative learning. The researchers also found that extended vocabulary lessons combined with collaborative work, and self-monitoring was effective (Jozwik & Douglas, 2017). This study supports the direction I envisioned my intervention taking with its emphasis on extended vocabulary lessons and collaboration.

In contrast, Maguire and colleagues (2018) emphasized the importance of *context* to teach vocabulary words. The researchers examined the role low socioeconomic status (SES) had on school age children's ability to acquire new word knowledge. It was a quantitative study of 68 children aged 8 to 15. Students were given a written test that had known words surrounding unknown words. Researchers compared the results to the SES status of the participants in the study. Maguire and colleagues (2018) found students from low SES struggle with word learning and learning words from context. The researchers argue students may be better served by teaching strategies for figuring out words by using context clues from the written text around the unknown word instead of teaching more vocabulary. They base this conclusion on the fact students with low SES struggled with figuring out words within the context of familiar words compared to students from higher SES status (Maguire, Schneider, Middleton, Ralph, Lopez, Ackerman, & Abel, 2018). The researchers concluded this may partly explain the vocabulary gap that exists based on SES status.

Unfortunately, this study does not provide the tools for teachers to teach words in context that would benefit students with limited material resources. Although the study included 18 bilingual students, it was not focused on English Learners. However, it does provide insight into my study with possible explanations for low vocabulary knowledge. Given this study suggests students struggle with figuring out words from context, my extended vocabulary lessons will include cloze activities to help students figure out unfamiliar words. Cloze lessons typically contain texts missing key words that the teacher guides students to figure out using the surrounding words and the larger context of the text. The cloze lessons I developed for the intervention had culturally relevant text since the passages came from fiction and non-fiction that reflected the cultures in my ELD class.

The researchers in this subsection examined extended and embedded vocabulary lessons. August and colleagues (2018) found extended vocabulary lessons more effective than embedded vocabulary lessons. Similarly, Jozwik and Douglas (2017) found extended vocabulary lessons successful for improving word knowledge especially combined with cooperative learning. In contrast, Maguire and colleagues' (2018) research focused on how embedded vocabulary lessons were necessary in order to help students figure out difficult words. I decided to include both perspectives in my action research project by including cloze activities into my extended vocabulary lessons.

Summary

The review of the literature began by examining educational theory that is relevant to my action research project. Both Geneva Gay and L.S. Vygotsky examined how students learn. Vygotsky wrote about how students meet their learning potential through their interactions with other students. He developed the theory of the zone of proximal development which described students constructing knowledge with capable peers. In fact, he argued that absent of peer support, students would not achieve to their individual potential (Vygotsky, 1978). His theory was pivotal in my creation of lessons that had cooperative learning and opportunities for discussions. Likewise, Gay's works were essential in creating lessons that were conscious of culture. Gay argued that understanding the role of culture and race play in education is necessary to provide opportunities for achievement of all students. For example, Gay wrote that communication styles and ways of learning are dependent on culture (Gay, 2000). As a result of reading this research, I was mindful of creating lessons that would attempt to address the learning styles of a diverse group of students. In addition, I made an effort to include literature that reflected the diversity of my classroom.

Similarly, the review of the available literature on English Learners and reading comprehension informed my action research project. My research began by looking at research done by Zhang and Shulley (2017) that examined common reading problems. Vaughn and colleagues (2019) stated that indicators of reading problems may differ between English Learners and English only students. I later focused on the research by Grasparil and Hernandez (2015) and O'Day (2019) who wrote about the differences English Learners have in reading acquisition. Their research led me to examine vocabulary instruction as a promising practice for English Learners to improve reading comprehension.

In investigating effective approaches to creating vocabulary lessons, I discovered that the work of Beck and McKeown (2002) informed which words to choose for instruction. Likewise, I found the works of Scott (2015), Shintani (2012), and Overturf, Montgomery, and Smith (2013) were instrumental in creating engaging lessons for vocabulary instruction. In addition, I learned the importance of extended vocabulary lessons through the research of August, Artzi, Barr, and Francis (2018) and Jozwik and Douglas (2017). However, I discovered Maquire and colleagues' (2018) research that suggested embedded vocabulary instruction was more valuable than extended lessons. Keeping in mind this perspective, my intervention included activities that provide vocabulary learning through context clues. Gaps in the literature include interventions that target classrooms with multiple home languages and grade levels. This action research project attempted to address some of these gaps in the literature.

In order to improve reading comprehension for English Learners, I designed an action research project that focuses on vocabulary instruction. Instruction included extended vocabulary lessons that are engaging for students. In addition, words were chosen carefully in order to be most effective for reading comprehension. Lessons also included the reading of vocabulary

words in context. Most importantly, all lessons were designed using cooperative learning, discussions, and were mindful of the diversity of the classroom. Furthermore, the action research project was designed to improve reading comprehension of English Learners through vocabulary instruction.

Chapter III

Methods

In the United States the opportunity gap (da Silva, et al., 2007) between English Learners (EL) and English only (EO) students increased over time despite efforts to increase EL performance (Polat, Zarecky-Hodge, & Schreiber, 2016). In addition, the 2011 results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) demonstrated the opportunity gap increases as students move up in grades. Hence, this opportunity gap is imperative to address since the National Center for Education Statistics state the number of English Learners in the U.S. was 9.6% percent of the student population in 2016. Interestingly, California has a much larger population of ELs with 20.2% of the student population considered EL in 2016 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Reflecting state-wide trends, the school site for this study has an EL population of 18.6% of the student body. Despite efforts to improve student outcomes for EL students, an opportunity gap exists at this site.

Regretfully, this opportunity gap may be due in large part to the fact that schools struggle to teach English Learners reading comprehension. Much of the research in reading instruction for ELs demonstrates the need for vocabulary instruction to improve reading comprehension (August, Artzi, Barr, & Francis, 2018; Scott, 2015; Wessels, 2011). The review of literature led me to the conclusion that a focus on vocabulary instruction was a promising practice to improve ELs' reading comprehension. I decided to examine this area of inquiry with my class of third, fourth, and fifth grade ELs that I taught one period a day, four times a week.

Interestingly, much of the research literature I examined stated effective vocabulary instruction for ELs required extended lessons that focused on student engagement. Many researchers found that effective strategies for vocabulary instruction includes collaboration, pre-

teaching, reading words in context, discussions, and study guides (August et al., 2018; Chung, 2112; Scott, 2015). With the understanding of this research, I developed the action research question: *How does extended vocabulary instruction affect reading comprehension in an ELD combination class of third, fourth, and fifth grade English Learners?*

Setting

The school site for this study was a suburban school in Northern California surrounded by quiet tree-lined neighborhoods of single-family homes. The area consisted of primarily middle to upper middle-income residents with some apartments that housed residents with lower socio-economic status. The school was home to three classes that serviced students with autism. These students mainstreamed into the general education classrooms as much as possible. Parent involvement was high at the school and parents raised money to support a garden lab, STEAM lab, reading lab, P.E., and a computer lab.

According to the most recent School Accountability Report Card (SARC), all teachers, with the exception of one, held a full credential. In addition, all teachers had the proper credentials to teach English Learners. Interestingly, at the time of the intervention, the staff did not reflect the backgrounds of the students who are 50% students of color. In fact, 95% of the classroom teachers were white and 5% of the teachers were Latinx. This was significant since possible cultural disconnects could have contributed to the opportunity gap. Howard (2010) explained these cultural disconnects when he described Gay and Howard's (2000) concept of a *demographic divide*. This divide is based on the observation that mainly white teachers from middle class backgrounds are teaching students who are largely students of color with different racial, cultural, economic, and language backgrounds (Howard, 2010). Howard argues that this divide contributes to the opportunity gap since many monolingual white teachers have low

expectations for students of color and limited training and experience working with these students. Therefore, this demographic divide contributes to limiting educational equity (Howard, 2010).

The school in this study had a student body of about 600 at the time of the intervention. In addition, 54% were self-identified boys and 46% were self-identified girls. According to the School Accountability Report Card of 2017-18, the largest ethnic/racial group was 49.3% white, followed by 20.7% Latinx, 8.6% Asian, 3.6% Filipino, 1.7% African American, and .3% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. The percent of English Learners (EL) was 18.6% of the students. At the time of the study, the English proficiency levels for the EL students were 25% emerging, 38% expanding, and 37% expanding/bridging based on the English Language Proficiency Assessment ELPAC exam. In addition, 24.1% of the school's students qualified for free or reduced priced lunch. This was in contrast to the district who had 43.8% of the students qualify.

Students at the site scored higher than district and state averages on the standardized California assessment, CAASPP. The percent of students who met or exceeded state standards in English language arts the 2017-2018 year was 69%. This is compared to 50% of the students meeting this benchmark in the district and in the state. Similarly, students at the school did better on the math assessment with 59% meeting or exceeding state standards. In contrast, only 39% of the students, district-wide met this goal, and 38% of the students state-wide met this benchmark.

Demographics of the Classroom

The participants were students in my English Language Development (ELD) class who were taught one period a day, four times a week. All students were invited to participate in the study. However, 19 out of the 20 students participated in the study. This was due to the fact one student was out of the country for the beginning of the intervention and missed the initial

assessments as well as the initial instruction. Three other students missed classes for a week or more to visit family outside the country during the intervention, but the students were still included in the study since they participated for most of the intervention.

The class was multi-age, and included one third grader, 12 fourth graders and six fifth graders. Interestedly, the students came from five different home languages including Spanish, Sinhala, Farsi, Portuguese, and Russian. The ethnic/racial breakdown was 73% Latinx, 20% white, and 5% South Asian. Additionally, the white students' families came from Eastern Europe and the Middle East, and Latinx students' families were from North America, Central America, and South America. The breakdown by gender was 68% self-identified boys and 32% self-identified girls. Strikingly, 37% of the students received special education services. This is compared to the overall school population where only 11% of the students received special education services.

Data Collection Strategies

More than one assessment was used to evaluate the effectiveness of extended vocabulary lessons to improve reading comprehension. Furthermore, all data were analyzed using quantitative methods. One of the assessments was the district wide IReady reading exam that was taken at the start of school and in early February. The IReady exam is a computerized multiple-choice test that is given three times a year. In addition, students were given a multiple-choice reading comprehension test (see Appendix A) that was based on released questions from the English language proficiency assessments for California (ELPAC) exam for English Learners. Students were also tested with a running record exam (see Appendix B) that included oral reading comprehension questions. In addition, I took field notes during the intervention and examined these notes using qualitative methods.

IReady exam. Students take the IReady test as a part of the general education classroom and it is administered to all students at the elementary schools in my district. It is a computerized exam that is divided into both mathematics and reading. I chose to focus on the data from the reading test that was given at the beginning of the year and again in late January into early February since the exam gave me data from before and after the intervention. Likewise, one of the factors for using this exam was it was required for all students, and it would not be an additional measure for students to take.

Moreover, I chose this test since I wondered if the extended vocabulary lessons would show an improvement in standardized reading scores. At my site, students took the exam in their classrooms using Chrome books. Students were given unlimited time to complete the exam and it was completed in more than one session. Absent students took the exam once they returned to school. The administration and timing of the exam was left to the discretion of the general education teacher. However, the district mandated the administration of the test within a certain time window. In addition, this exam was one of the factors used to determine eligibility for exit from English development classes to RFEP (Reclassified Fluent English Proficient) status.

Multiple choice reading exam. I gave students a multiple-choice comprehension exam (see Appendix A) before and after the intervention. I pulled questions from the ELPAC released questions. The ELPAC is administered once a year to English Learners. Achieving a high score is necessary in order to receive RFEP status. This test version is the same for third, fourth and fifth graders. These questions were chosen since they were similar to what students need to do well on in order to exit English development classes.

The comprehension reading test given for this study was ten questions long. The questions referred to two reading passages. One of the reading passages was fiction and was a

story about boy who is distracted by his phone. In contrast, the non-fiction text was about voting in the United States. The questions included inferential questions that asked about main idea, theme, and were interpretive. For example, a sample fiction question asked, "what can be inferred about Ethan during the car ride to the supermarket?" Similarly, the non-fiction text had the question, "what was the main idea of the text?" There were also vocabulary questions such as "what does the word extended MOST LIKELY mean in the sentence?" Some the words used in the released ELPAC questions and passages were included into the list of words for vocabulary lessons. For example, I taught the words extended and theme during the intervention.

Running records. In addition to the other assessments, students read the same running record passage (see Appendix B) out loud and answered questions orally. The running record chosen was from Columbia University's teacher college website readingandwritingproject.org. The running record assessment from this website aligns with the reading program the school site adopted of Lucy Calkin's Units of Study. Given the three grade levels of the study, I chose level Q since it approximately represents a beginning of fourth grade reading level.

Moreover, I assessed the students individually. I did this primarily while the rest of the class did IReady reading lessons on Chromebooks. Each student read the passage aloud and I took notes on their errors and fluency. Following the reading, I asked students individually the same four questions. Two of the questions were literal and two of the questions were inferential. I encouraged students to reread the passage if they desired. For example, one question asks, "the story says, 'It might take a bird to hatch eggs, but a boy could hatch a plan!' What was Jack's plan?" Next, I gave a point to each correct response with a total of four points possible.

Field Notes. During the intervention I took daily field notes. These I completed right after the lesson since English Language Development was at the end of the day. I took about ten

minutes to complete the entries and my notes were hand-written in a notebook. The notes included the activity of the day and my perceptions of student engagement. I also noted my evaluation of the lesson and any possible modifications to improve instruction. In addition, I took notes on attendance and the reasons for absences. Many entries also included my reflections and questions I had about the intervention's success. Once the study was done, I analyzed the field notes qualitatively to determine themes and trends.

Procedures

The intervention occurred over nine weeks and began in late October and continued into early January. The intervention was interrupted one week for Thanksgiving and two weeks for winter vacation. Additionally, the intervention consisted of three phases. The first phase was a week-long and consisted of assessing students for their current reading comprehension. Next, the intervention was six weeks of instruction that occurred over seven weeks as a result of canceled classes due to field trips, Halloween, and Veterans' Day. Finally, the last week of the intervention was for assessments and followed winter vacation.

The intervention itself consisted of extended vocabulary lessons intended to improve reading comprehension. Moreover, I based the lessons on the research I did that supported the value of teaching vocabulary in order to boost reading comprehension of English Learners (August, Artzi, Barr, & Francis, 2018; Scott, 2015; Wessels, 2011). Interestingly, I designed the lessons to encourage cooperative learning and discussions. Many of the lesson structures were inspired by lesson designs from the book ***Word Nerds: Teaching All Students to Learn and Love Vocabulary*** (Overturf, Montgomery, & Smith, 2013). In addition, I taught words that were from the ELPAC released questions and tier two vocabulary words. Tier two vocabulary words are words that have the greatest impact across subject areas and are common across disciplines

(Beck & McKeown, 2002). Moreover, I chose the tier two words mainly from multicultural literature and multicultural non-fiction books I taught to the class.

Pre-intervention. Students' families were notified of the intervention and letters were sent home in the students' home language. In addition, I assessed the students' reading comprehension through running records and a multiple-choice test. I did this to create a baseline assessment in order to gauge reading comprehension improvements. Additionally, students were assessed previously by the IReady computer reading test as a part of the district assessments all students were required to take.

Moreover, the multiple-choice exam was based on the ELPAC released questions. The exam was ten questions long and followed passages that the students read silently. Interestedly, there was one fiction reading passage and one non-fiction reading passage. In addition, I assessed students individually with a running record. I did the running records at a back table in the classroom during class while most of the students worked on computerized reading lessons. The running record consisted of the student reading a passage out loud and then answering comprehension questions orally about the passage. This phase lasted a week and preceded the seven-week intervention.

Intervention. The intervention followed a four-day instruction plan since the class met four times a week. Due to interruptions as a result of holidays and field trips, the instructional plan didn't always fall within a calendar week. Each week students would learn six vocabulary words (see Appendix C). These words were from the ELPAC released questions and were also tier two words from books read to the class. Furthermore, I introduced the books once a week and each reflected a culture represented by the students (see Appendix D).

The first day of instruction included pre-teaching of words. Students in cooperative groups taught a word to the class. I gave students the word and a kid friendly definition before I asked students to present to the class. Next, I read a story or non-fiction book that reflected one of the cultures represented in the class. For example, I taught the Mexican folktale ***Adelita*** (DePaola, 2002) the first week. After reading the passage, I administered a cloze activity using the six vocabulary words and sentences from the book (see Appendix E). The cloze activity required students to use context clues to figure out the missing vocabulary word in a sentence. If time allowed, I would do a quick vocabulary rap in which I would use synonyms. This was an adopted lesson from ***Word Nerds: Teaching All Students to Learn and Love Vocabulary*** (Overturf, Montgomery, & Smith, 2013).

Likewise, on day two I used the reading selection of the week to discuss the vocabulary words in context. In addition, students helped create a vocabulary anchor chart developed by Overturf, Montgomery, & Smith (2013) that used synonyms to help define the vocabulary words. Similarly, on day three students continued to work on vocabulary words. Furthermore, students completed an adapted Frayer model for each word that they pasted into a vocabulary journal (see Appendix F). Interestedly, the fourth day students reviewed the week's words using activities from ***Word Nerds: Teaching All Students to Learn and Love Vocabulary*** (Overturf, Montgomery, & Smith, 2013). One activity consisted of breaking into groups and presenting the words in a game of charades. Similarly, if time allowed, students created songs in groups using the vocabulary words to have an American Idol party in which they sang their songs to the class.

The intervention was a six-week plan that took seven weeks to complete and focused on extended vocabulary lessons that included student engagement. Furthermore, lessons focused on cooperative learning in order to engage students in their thinking and practice speaking English. I

chose books to highlight vocabulary words and allow students to practice figuring out these words using context clues. In addition, the books had the added benefit of reflecting the cultures of the classroom. These books were chosen to support a culturally responsive classroom by honoring the different cultures present and help students develop a sense of belonging.

Post-intervention. The week following instruction focused on assessment. Moreover, students took the same multiple-choice exam as the pre-assessment and were reassessed by the same running record. Both exams took place primarily during the English language development class. Similar to the pre-assessment, the running records were administered at the back table during class while students worked on computerized lessons. The IReady reading test was taken at different times in the students' general education classes. The district timeline required that the IReady tests be administered during late January into early February.

Plan for Data Analysis

I used three sources of data to address the following research question: *How does extended vocabulary instruction affect reading comprehension in an ELD combination class of third, fourth, and fifth grade English Learners?* All three data sources looked at reading comprehension from different angles. First, I compared the IReady scores from the beginning of the school year to late January into early February scores. Second, I gave students the same reading comprehension multiple choice test before and after the intervention to monitor growth. Third, I gave students the same reading running record assessment to access reading comprehension using oral language.

I chose all three data sources to create a triangulation of data to make sure the results were valid. Furthermore, I examined the results using quantitative methods. All data compared pre and post assessments to gauge student growth in reading comprehension. I gave each

assessment a numerical score that allowed comparison between students' reading comprehension before and after the intervention. I examined the set of data using measures of central tendency. For example, I looked at the mean and mode in each exam to gauge the effectiveness of the intervention. In addition, I examined and analyzed discrepancies between the results in the different assessments. In contrast to the three data sources used for the triangulation of data, the field notes were analyzed using qualitative methods. The entries were coded to develop categories and identify themes.

Summary

This research study examined the effectiveness of extended vocabulary lessons in improving reading comprehension for English Learners. I taught students extended vocabulary lessons that focused on student engagement over a seven-week period. The lessons included pre-teaching of vocabulary words, review of words, cloze activities, writing, and reading the words in context. Cooperative learning was a key component as students did activities like create songs for vocabulary words, play charades, and present vocabulary words to the class. The students in the study consisted of third, fourth and fifth graders in an English development class taught four times a week for one period of the day. Additionally, I assessed students before and after the intervention using IReady scores, multiple-choice reading comprehension tests, and running records that included comprehension questions. I examined the results of this study using quantitative analysis, and the results of this analysis are examined in the next chapter.

Chapter IV

Findings

The purpose of this action research project was to examine whether extended vocabulary lessons improved reading comprehension in English Learners (EL). While teaching an English Language Development (ELD) class of third, fourth and fifth graders, I observed students who struggled with reading comprehension. My observations mirrored what is an opportunity gap (da Silva, et al., 2007) that many English Learners face nation-wide. English Learners experience this opportunity gap due to the lack of access to educational resources that many other students receive. The Department of Education found only 9% of fourth grade ELs in the U.S. were rated proficient or above on a standardized reading test (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Regretfully, the opportunity gap in reading increases as students move up through the grades (Polat, Zarecky-Hodge, & Schreiber, 2016).

A review of the literature suggested that vocabulary was essential to reading comprehension for English Learners (August, Artzi, Barr, & Francis, 2018; Scott, 2015; Wessels, 2011). In addition, I examined effective methods for teaching vocabulary to English Learners. The research suggested that extended lessons that focused on student engagement were the most effective for English Learners. These strategies include collaboration, pre-teaching, reading words in context, discussions, and study guides (August et al., 2018; Chung, 2112; Scott, 2015). In trying to imagine a promising practice, I came up with the following action research question: *How does extended vocabulary instruction affect reading comprehension in an ELD combination class of third, fourth, and fifth grade English Learners?*

Overview of Methods and Data Collection

The action research project occurred over nine weeks. It consisted of a pre-intervention phase of one week, seven weeks of instruction, and a post-intervention phase of one week. During the pre-intervention phase, I administered the multiple-choice reading comprehension test (see Appendix A) and a running record test (see Appendix B). I also notified parents about the intervention. Earlier in the school year, homeroom teachers gave the IReady exam in their classrooms as a part of the district's mandated assessments. The intervention was set up as six weeks of instruction, but it took seven weeks to complete due to holidays and field trips. The intervention consisted of extended vocabulary lessons that included a focus on engagement and included literature that represented the students' cultures. The lessons were conducted four times a week for 40 minutes. Moreover, lessons focused on cooperative learning in order to engage students in their thinking and to practice speaking English. During the intervention, I took field notes right after instruction. Following the intervention, the post-intervention phase included retesting students with the running record assessment (see Appendix B) and the multiple-choice comprehension test (see Appendix A). The IReady exam was taken by students in their homeroom classrooms in late January/early February as a part of the district's timeline for assessment.

Demographics of Participants

The participants were from my English Language Development class and included one third grader, twelve fourth graders and six fifth graders. They were taught one period a day, four times a week. Students in my study had a total of five different home languages which included Spanish, Sinhala, Farsi, Portuguese, and Russian. Figure 1 shows the percentages of students speaking each language.

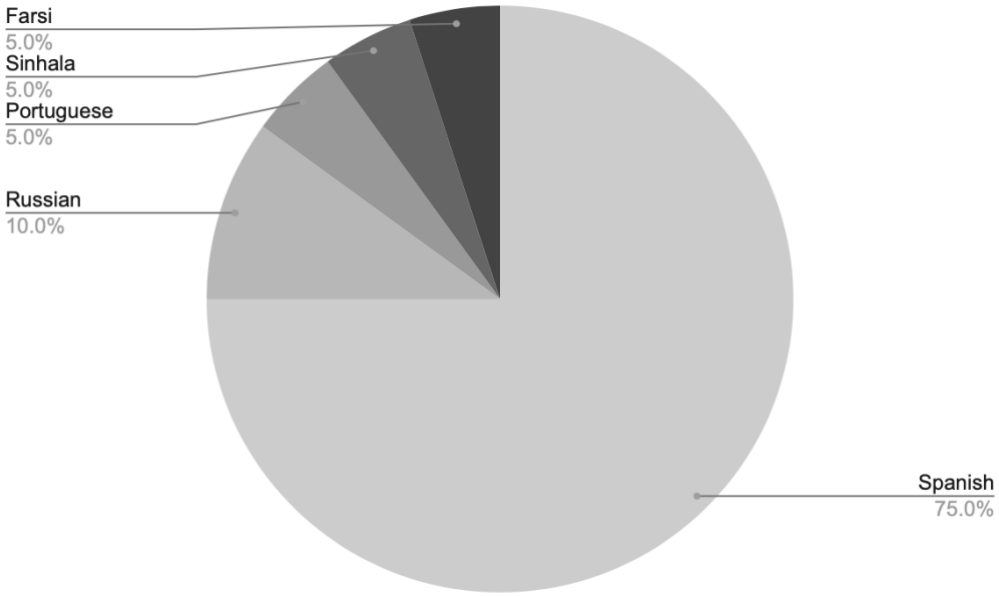

Figure 1. Students' languages (*N*=19).

Students' ethnic/racial breakdown was 73% Latinx, 20% white, and 5% South Asian. Interestedly, the white students' families came from Eastern Europe and the Middle East, and Latinx students' families were from North America, Central America, and South America. Sixty-eight percent of the participants were self-identified boys and 32% self-identified girls. In addition, 37% of the students received special education services.

Analysis of the IReady Exam

Students took a standardized reading exam before and after the intervention. The exam was required by the district, and all students took the exam in early September. The second exam was taken late January into early February. Students took the exam in their homeroom classrooms using Chromebooks. The mean was 482 in September and it was 507 in January/early February. Figure 2 shows students' IReady scores. It is important to note that five students' scores decreased and fourteen students' scores increased. Interestedly, the mode in

September was 497, and there was no mode in the winter since students all had different numerical scores.

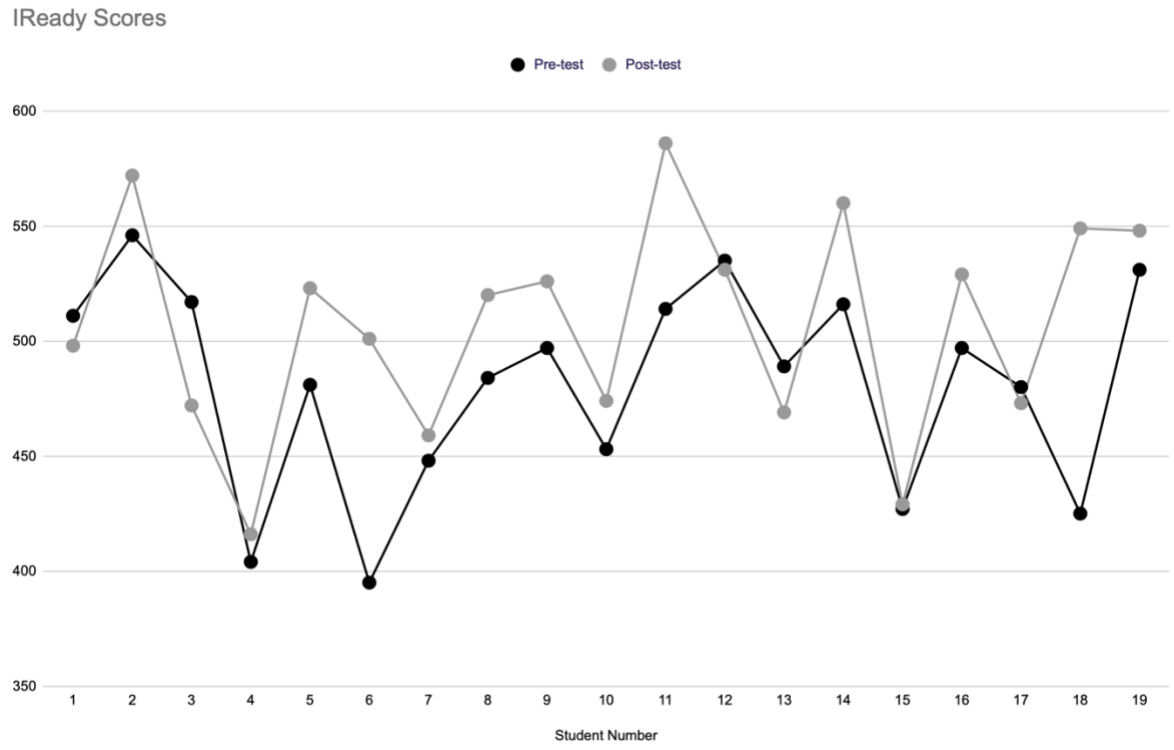

Figure 2. IReady scores (*N*=19).

In addition to numerical scores in the IReady test, students were assigned an IReady grade level reading score. In September, the grade level mean was second grade and the winter mean was middle of second grade. This would suggest students made half a grade level growth between September and late January in reading. The most dramatic increase was by a student who went from a first grade reading score to a fourth grade reading score. The mode for both the pre and post-tests was third grade. The scores for reading grade levels varied from kindergarten

to fourth grade. Overall, students showed an improvement in reading comprehension based on this exam.

Analysis of the Reading Comprehension Test

Before and after the intervention, students took a reading comprehension test of 20 questions (see Appendix A). The questions were multiple choice and came from the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) released questions. Although three grades are represented in my class, the same ELPAC exam is given to third, fourth and fifth grade students in California. Each student received a score based on the percent of correct answers with 100% being the highest score possible. The highest score of 80% was achieved by two students. The lowest score was 10%. The pre-test and post-test results are shown on Figure 3.

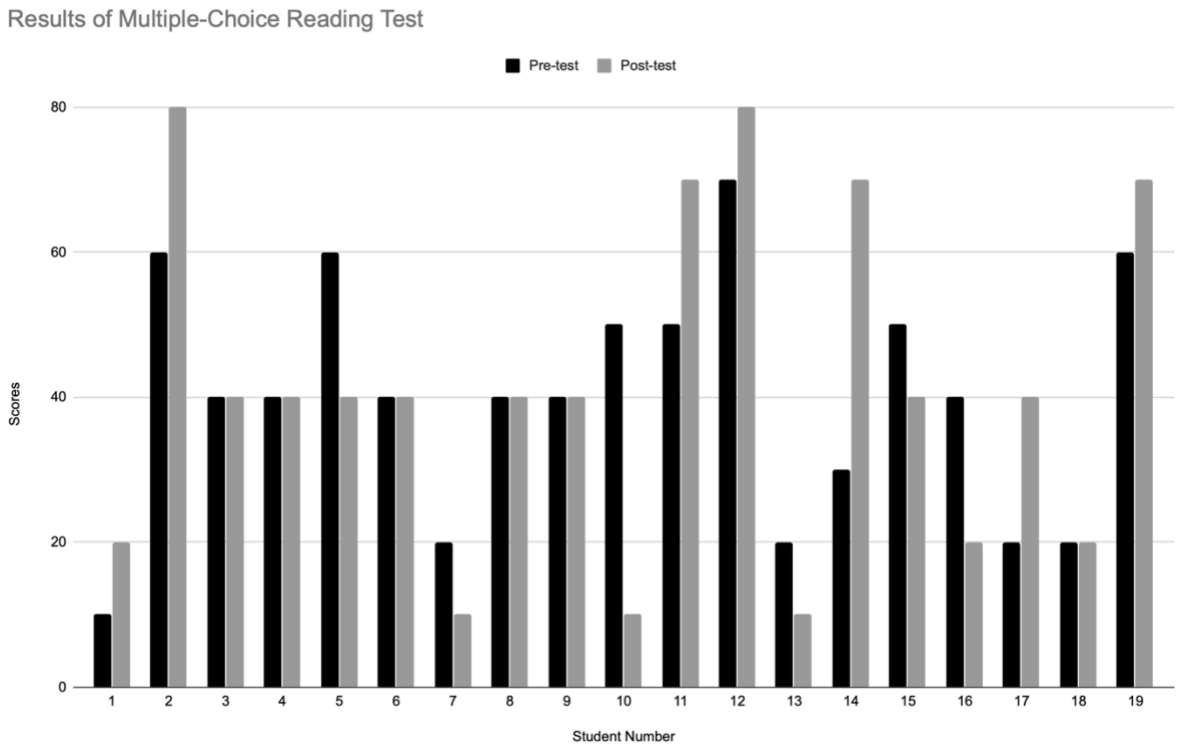

Figure 3. Results of multiple-choice reading test (*N*-19).

Overall, the reading comprehension test results suggested students made limited growth on this measure. The mean in the pre-test was 40 and the mean in the post-test was 41. Similarly, the mode was 40 for both tests. Interestedly, many students' scores remained unchanged with six students having the same scores for both the pre and post-tests. In addition, six students' scores went down. Only seven student scores went up. The most dramatic increase was one student's score moving from 30 to 70.

Analysis of Running Records

Students took a running record assessment (see Appendix B) before and after the intervention. Students read the same early fourth grade passage out loud while I took notes on their errors and fluency. After reading the passage, students answered four reading comprehension questions. I gave a point for each correct response with a total of four points possible. The questions consisted of two literal comprehension questions and two inferential comprehension questions.

Overall, students performed better in the post-test. The mean in the pre-test was 1.05. In comparison, the mean of the post-test was 2.21. This was a percentage increase of 110%. Similarly, the mode demonstrates improvement. The mode was 1 in the pre-test and 2 in the post-test. Figure 4 compares the scores of the pre-assessment and post-assessment.

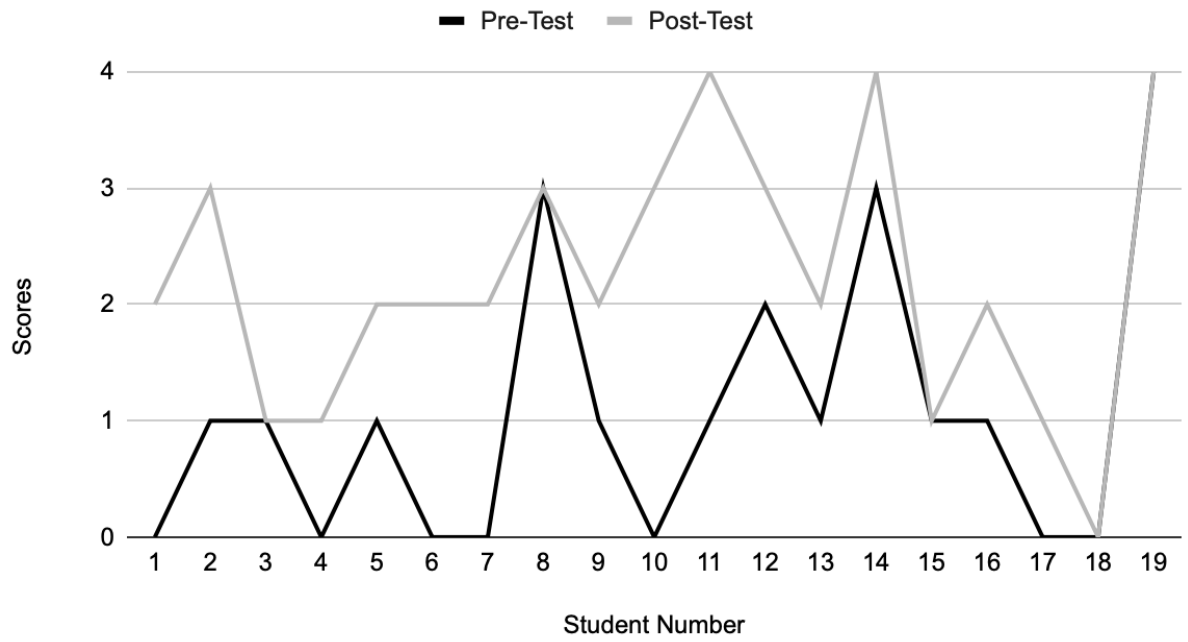

Figure 4. Pre-post running record scores (*N*=19).

It is interesting to note that no students' scores dropped. However, four students had scores that remained with same with scores of 0, 1, 3, and 4. In addition, the students who had no changes in scores had IEPs for learning disabilities. Three students had a perfect score in the post-assessment. One of the students who earned this score went from a 1 to a 4. This exam would suggest students demonstrated improvement in reading comprehension as demonstrated by their dramatic improvement in their running record scores.

Analysis of Field Notes

During the intervention I took daily field notes following instruction. These notes contained descriptions of class activities, attendance, reasons for tardy and absent students, my evaluation of the lesson, and my general reflections and questions. There were 24 entries, and these varied in length from half a page to a page and half. I later examined my field notes using qualitative methods by first coding the notes by looking for key words. After creating categories,

themes emerged, which elucidated the effectiveness of the novel instruction and illuminated possible barriers to student success. Three prominent themes emerged and are shown on Table 1. These themes were *hesitancy and uncertainty*, *excitement and understanding*, and *a lack of support by colleagues*.

Two themes focused on student engagement. One of the themes was of *hesitancy and uncertainty*. Especially in the beginning of the intervention, there were words like *unsure*, *shy*, and *struggle*. For example, I wrote that students were uncertain and shy when they first presented the definitions of vocabulary words to the class. As the intervention continued, a theme of *excitement and understanding* emerged. Words like *excited*, *engaged*, *understood* appeared often. An illustration of this excitement is in week three when I wrote students had "high energy and engagement completing the cloze activity". The number of positive words related to engagement increased as the progressed.

Despite increases in engagement and the excitement of students towards lessons, there was also an increase in absent and tardy students due to homeroom teachers withholding students from ELD class. My notes show that the mean for attendance for the intervention was 83% and the mode was 89%. Regretfully, teachers often kept students in their homeroom during ELD instruction. Teachers rarely provided explanation for keeping students. When questioned, teachers often said that students had to finish incomplete classwork. While reviewing my field notes, I found teachers withheld students from class 11 out of the 24 days of the intervention. Furthermore, the third theme I discovered was *a lack of support by colleagues*. Evidence of this came in the form of not only keeping students in their classroom during ELD class, but teachers also attempted to cancel ELD classes. For example, on November 12, a grade level team

approached me about canceling the rotation that day. Moreover, most third, fourth and fifth teachers wanted to cancel ELD classes during the two parent conference weeks.

My notes illustrated how many teachers did not support ELD instruction. On December 10, I noted “she isn’t the only teacher to express frustration and anger towards me” over ELD. On this date I also wrote that I had begun to eat lunch alone in the classroom instead of the staffroom to avoid colleagues’ hostility. Regretfully, teachers expressed to me their frustration with mandated ELD instruction, having to send their students to ELD class, and the adjustment to their schedules to accommodate ELD instruction. Although ELD instruction is mandated by the state of California, many teachers sought to undermine instruction with cancelations and by not sending students to class on time or at all. In addition, some teachers expressed resentment with having to absorb my English only students while I taught ELD.

Table 1

Summary of Common Themes from the Researcher's Field Notes

Theme	**Example 1**	**Example 2**	**Example 3**
Hesitancy and Uncertainty	"Students paired into groups of 2-3 to present words and definitions to class. Students unsure and shy". - 10/28/19	"Students were much more uncertain the first time we did the activity." - 11/7/19	"Students struggled with the American Idol activity, but it was better than last week." - 11/21/19
Excitement and Understanding	"Students remember words better than last week. I'm not sure if it is because the words are easier, or students are more familiar with the lessons. Students are excited!" - 11/8/19	"Students were more focused overall. Did 5 words. Students enjoyed sharing and coming up with antonyms." - 11/12/19	"Students did a great job with charades. Students could even guess citizens! The actors shook hands and the kids guessed it right away." - 12/5/19
Lack of Support by Colleagues	"One teacher didn't send two students. I'm unsure why." - 11/8/19	"Checked in with the teacher at recess. She said, 'We were doing a group project and there was no way I could send them.' I asked if I would see them tomorrow. She said, 'Probably.'"- 12/9/19	"I know that by fighting for students to attend, there may be a personal cost. However, the cost of saying nothing impacts students." 12/10/19

The examples of Table 1 from my field notes demonstrates the themes of *hesitancy and uncertainty*, *excitement and understanding*, and the *lack of support by colleagues*. In the beginning of the intervention, students were hesitant and struggled with some of the lessons. As the intervention continued, students gained confidence and became excited about the content. By reviewing the field notes, I also discovered that many staff members were hostile to me and the ELD learners. These field notes provided context for the implementation of the promising practice of extended vocabulary lessons to improve reading comprehension.

Summary

This action research project focused on the effect of extended vocabulary lessons on English Learner's reading comprehension. I taught an intervention that consisted of engaging vocabulary lessons that lasted seven weeks. I gathered data from IReady reading scores, a multiple-choice reading comprehension test, running records, and researcher field notes to create a triangulation of data to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. I analyzed the three data points quantitatively using measures of central tendency. For all assessments I looked at the mean and mode in each exam to gauge the effectiveness of the intervention. Two out of the three assessments demonstrate improvement in reading comprehension, while one exam showed little positive change. In addition, I took field notes during the intervention to gauge students' engagement, attendance, lessons' effectiveness, and my perceptions of the intervention. I analyzed the field notes qualitatively by coding the entries and developed themes.

In the next chapter, I examine the results of this action research project. In addition, I will compare this study to other studies examined in the literature review. Moreover, I discuss the

implications of this study. I also explore future plans as a result of this project and discuss possible next steps as a transformative teacher leader.

Chapter V

Conclusions

English Learners face an opportunity gap (da Silva, et al., 2007) compared to English only students in reading. Regretfully, on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam only 9% of fourth grade English Learners (EL) in the U.S. were rated proficient or above (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Similarly, roughly 18% of fourth grade ELs in California met or exceeded reading proficiency on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) (California Department of Education, 2020). However, approximately 55% of English only (EO) students met or exceeded reading proficiency on the same test (California Department of Education, 2020). This opportunity gap is especially alarming in California where a large percentage of students are English Learners. In the fall of 2018, roughly 42% of the students in public schools in California spoke a language other than English at home (California Department of Education, 2020). In addition, about 70% of the English Learners in California are in grades K-6 (California Department of Education, 2020).

At my school site the percent of English Learners (EL) was close to 19%. Following national and state trends, I found as a teacher of English Language Development (ELD), English Learners struggled with reading compared to their English only peers. I taught a multi-grade class of third, fourth and fifth grade students ELD four times a week for 40 minutes for each class session. The class had 19 students at the time of the intervention and all students participated in this action research study. A review of the literature suggested that extended vocabulary instruction was a promising practice for improving reading comprehension for English Learners (August, Artzi, Barr, & Francis, 2018; Scott, 2015; Wessels, 2011). This led to

the action research question: *How does extended vocabulary instruction affect reading comprehension in an ELD combination class of third, fourth, and fifth grade English Learners?*

The triangulation of data collected from this action research study was used to determine if extended vocabulary instruction improved reading comprehension of English Learners. Two out of three data instruments showed improvement in reading comprehension, and one measure showed no improvement. This chapter is organized into the following sections: summary of findings, interpretation of findings, limitations, summary, and plans for future action. The summary of findings examines the IReady reading exam, the reading comprehension multiple-choice exam (see Appendix A), the running record assessment (see Appendix B), and my field notes. The following section will interpret findings. The next two sections will discuss possible limitations and give a summary of the study. Finally, the last section will describe future actions I will take as a result of this study.

Summary of Findings

Three measures were used to examine if students' reading comprehension improved as a result of an intervention that focused on extended vocabulary lessons. The intervention lasted nine weeks and included one week to notify families and administer pre-assessments, seven weeks of instruction, and one week for post-assessments. The intervention was four times a week, 40 minutes a day. Moreover, the intervention consisted of extended vocabulary lessons that included engagement and collaboration. The measures for the study included the standardized IReady exam, a reading comprehension multiple-choice test (see Appendix A), running records (see Appendix B), and field notes. With the exception of the field notes that were analyzed qualitatively by coding entries and developing themes, the data were analyzed quantitatively using measures of central tendency by determining the mean and mode for each

exam. The IReady exam was taken before the intervention as a part of district-wide assessments in late August, and it was given again following the intervention in late January/early February due to district timelines. The reading comprehension multiple-choice test and the running records were given the weeks before and after instruction.

Interestedly, the IReady exam and the running record test demonstrated improvement in reading comprehension. In contrast, the multiple-choice reading comprehension test suggested no improvement in reading comprehension by students. In addition to the three exams, I took field notes during the intervention to gauge students' engagement, attendance, lessons' effectiveness, and my perceptions of the intervention. I analyzed the field notes qualitatively by coding the entries and developed three themes.

IReady exam. The IReady exam was administered before and after the intervention as a part of a district assessment taken by all students each trimester. The exam is on the computer and students take the assessment in their homeroom classrooms. Students demonstrated reading growth based on this exam. The mean went from 482 in September to 507 in late January/early February. Interestingly, the mode was 497 in September, and since individual scores varied greatly in the second exam, there was no mode for the post-test. In addition to raw scores, the IReady exam places a grade level reading equivalent. The grade level equivalent suggests students reading ability in the classroom. Moreover, this score also showed reading growth. Students went from a mean of beginning second grade reading level to a mean of halfway through the second grade, indicating a half of year growth in reading. The mode remained the same at a third grade reading level for both exams. Overall, the IReady exam suggests that students reading improved based on this standardized assessment.

Reading comprehension test. The reading comprehension test (see Appendix A) was a multiple-choice test I created using released questions from the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC) exam. Third, fourth and fifth grade students take the same ELPAC exam as a part of California assessments. The multiple-choice exam I made was 20 questions long and was given before and after instruction. Scores were calculated as percentages with 100% as the highest possible score. The exam indicated little improvement between the pre and post assessment since the mean for the pre-test was 40% and the mean for the post-test was 41%. The mode was 40% for both tests. While seven student scores went up, six student scores went down and six remained unchanged. Since the mean showed relatively little change, the exam doesn't demonstrate student reading comprehension growth.

Running records. The running records assessment (see Appendix B) demonstrated the largest gains in reading comprehension with a percentage increase of 110% between the pre and post-tests. Running records were administered before and after the extended vocabulary lessons as a one on one assessment in which students read a passage and answered comprehension questions orally. There were four questions, and each question was given a point for each correct response. The mean in the pre-test was 1.05 and the mean in the post-test was 2.21. In addition, the mode was 1 in the pre-test and a 2 in the post-test. These scores indicate students' reading comprehension improved as a result of the intervention.

Researcher field notes. The field notes provided context for the intervention and provided data such as attendance. I took notes immediately following instruction. There were 24 entries, and each entry was half a page to a page long. I used qualitative methods by first coding the notes with key words that I later used to create themes. My hope in analyzing the notes was to better understand the effectiveness of instruction and to discover possible barriers to student

success. Three themes emerged from the field notes and included *hesitancy and uncertainty by students*, *students' excitement and understanding*, and the *lack of support by colleagues for the intervention*.

Interestedly, student engagement was central to the themes of *hesitancy and uncertainty by students* and *students' excitement and understanding.* In the beginning of the intervention, there were words like *unsure*, *shy*, and *struggle* indicating that students were hesitant and uncertain about the lessons. As the intervention continued, words like *excited*, *engaged*, and *understood* appeared in the notes suggesting students enjoyed the lessons, students were engaged in learning, and students were learning key concepts. The notes indicate that at first students were hesitant about the lessons, but as students became more familiar with the lesson delivery, they grasped the learning and were engaged in the instruction.

However, the notes also provided insight into the challenges outside my control as a teacher. The theme *lack of support by colleagues for the intervention* suggests that not all teachers were supportive of the ELD class. For example, my notes indicate that on 46% of the intervention days, some students were kept from attending ELD class by their general education teacher. In addition, my notes suggest teachers were unhappy with the rotation based on the comments to me and their desire to cancel ELD instruction on more than one occasion. In fact, most teachers wanted to cancel ELD class during the two weeks set aside for parent conferences.

Interpretation of Findings

The triangulation of data suggests that extended vocabulary lessons to improve reading comprehension in English Learners is a promising intervention, but the evidence is not conclusive. Two out of the three measures indicated success, while one measure showed little improvement in reading comprehension. The standardized reading test, IReady, showed reading

comprehension growth as well as the running record assessment. However, the multiple-choice reading comprehension test demonstrated little improvement. Moreover, the field notes provide context as to why the evidence may be inconclusive since student attendance was poor and there was a lack of support from most general education teachers.

Reading gains in standardized testing. The IReady exam results suggest students improved reading comprehension. The mean for their raw scores went from a 482 in September to 507 in late January/ early February. In addition, the mean for the reading grade level equivalent went up half a grade level. Some individual students made even greater improvement with one student who went from a first grade reading level to a fourth grade reading level. Interestedly, the IReady test is a standardized exam that is designed to be a similar to the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASP).

Many of the lessons in the intervention were based on the work *Word Nerds: Teaching All Students to Learn and Love Vocabulary* in which the authors also found improvement in standardized reading scores after completing engaging vocabulary lessons (Overturf, Montgomery, & Smith, 2013). In fact, the authors found that most of the students in classrooms that implemented the lessons earned standardized reading scores of "proficient" and "distinguished" in the Kentucky Core Content Test for Reading in 2011 (Overturf, Montgomery, & Smith, 2013). While students in this intervention did not have the gains shown in their study, students in this intervention improved in standardized reading scores. One reason for this difference may be due to the fact the researchers in *Word Nerds: Teaching All Students to Learn and Love Vocabulary* incorporated vocabulary instruction throughout the day and throughout the year. In addition, while most of the students in their school were children of color and limited material resources, most of the children were English only students.

Furthermore, it is important to note that students in my intervention also had reading instruction in their homeroom classrooms. The IReady test gains could be attributed to the homeroom instruction as well. Therefore, due to the influence of multiple variables, it is difficult to ascertain for certain that the gains made in the IReady exam were based solely on the extended vocabulary instruction intervention completed in ELD class. However, it is important to note that this exam demonstrated reading growth by ELs.

Inconclusive results in multiple choice exam. Unlike the IReady exam, the multiple-choice comprehension test suggests little improvement in reading comprehension by students. The mean pre-test was a 40% and the mean in the post-test was 41%. Similarly, the mode for both tests was 40%. It is interesting to note that this was the only teacher made test used in this intervention. I made the test using released questions from the ELPAC exam given to all third, fourth, and fifth grade EL students. The exam I made was difficult, and due to this difficulty, it may be impossible to show growth. For many students in the intervention, the exam may have been too difficult to provide a baseline to demonstrate their reading comprehension ability. As a result, students may not have shown growth due to the exam's failure to demonstrate a range of understanding for reading comprehension. Instead, it may have only shown what students did not know, as opposed to showing where they began and how they improved as a result of the intervention.

Interestedly, research has shown there is a large vocabulary gap between EOs and ELs, and this may be a factor in this exam's results. (August, Artzi, Barr, & Francis, 2018). For example, while August and colleagues (2018) found extended vocabulary lessons effective, they also suggested that vocabulary instruction may need to extend to more of the school day in order for ELs to overcome the word knowledge gap. By providing increased vocabulary instruction,

students would be given the tools to lessen the opportunity gap (da Silva, et al., 2007) English Learners experience in reading. Since this intervention's instructional phase only lasted seven weeks and was four times a week for 40 minutes, it may not have been enough instructional minutes to have a large impact on vocabulary acquisition.

Impressive improvement in running records exam. Running records is an assessment I did with each student in the intervention. The student first read aloud a passage while I took notes. I then asked each student four questions and students gave verbal responses. Each question was given a point and students scored a mean of 1.05 in the pre-test and 2.21 in the post-test. This exam saw the most improvement with a 110% increase in scores. This dramatic improvement may be in part due to the nature of the exam. Students may have felt comfortable with the intimate nature of the test since they read to their teacher and answered questions individually. Gay (2000) noted that students who are not a part of white middle class culture are often underestimated since their communication style is different from their teachers, and schools may not recognize student knowledge due to a mismatch of communication styles. By being able to show their knowledge verbally, as opposed to a written or computerized exam, some students may have been better able to demonstrate their knowledge by explaining in their own words their understanding of the passage.

Moreover, the low stress nature of reading and answering questions verbally may have also been a factor in the exam's success. The researcher, Shintani (2012), discovered the use of input-based tasks that focused on natural conversation of listening then doing a language activity led to vocabulary and grammar growth. She attributes some of her intervention's success on students' ability to acquire vocabulary in a low stress manner. Similarly, this exam allowed

students to respond in their own words to the task of answering reading comprehension questions in a low stress environment.

Engagement and colleague resistance. The field notes were taken daily after instruction during the intervention. Two themes of engagement emerged, including *a) hesitancy* and *b) uncertainty by students* and *students' excitement and understanding.* The notes demonstrate that while students were less confident in the lessons in the beginning, students later became more confident and their understanding of content grew. Students engagement and discussions with each other were crucial in students gaining deep understanding of the content.

Another theme that emerged was *lack of support by colleagues for the intervention*. This took the form of teachers denying students access to instruction, trying to cancel intervention classes, and negative comments about English language development classes in general. Since students were unable to attend all the sessions, the ability of the intervention to improve reading comprehension was compromised due to lack of attendance. It is also possible students in the intervention realized their teacher's lack of support for the intervention, and that might have had a negative impact on their attitude towards coming to English language development class. It is important to note that all the homeroom teachers were from a white monolingual middle class background in contrast to the students who were mostly students of color, multilingual, and from families with limited material resources. This disconnect in cultures may have had a negative impact on achievement. For example, Valenzuela (1999) found that Mexican American students in her study define caring differently than teachers and rebelled against "schooling" and "de-Mexicanization" of their language and culture. In addition, Valenzuela found that teachers expected students to care about school before caring for the students. In contrast, students in Valenzuela's study expected teachers to care about students before students would care about

school. Moreover, students in my study may have felt discouraged by the attitudes of their homeroom teachers. This in turn could have had a negative impact on their reading achievement.

Limitations

Due to the expectations of my graduate program, the intervention was limited to nine weeks. This may not have been enough time to develop vocabulary acquisition to improve reading comprehension. In addition, the sample size was small and consisted of 19 students from my English language development (ELD) class. The class itself was unique in that it consisted of third, fourth, and fifth graders and represented five home languages. The diversity of ages and languages may have had an impact on providing age appropriate and culturally relevant instruction. Furthermore, these challenges potentially limited the transferability of the results to other teaching settings and populations of students. In addition, attendance was an issue for students in the intervention since many homeroom teachers did not consistently send students to ELD class.

Moreover, I had the dual roles of teacher and researcher. This potentially limited my ability to be objective since I had a vested interest in the students doing well. Furthermore, there was the inherit power dynamics of teacher and student that likely had an effect on the research in that students may have felt pressure to please me as their teacher.

Summary

There is an opportunity gap (da Silva, et al., 2007) between EOs and ELs when it comes to reading. In the United States, EOs outperform ELs in reading comprehension assessments. In fact, the opportunity gap increases as students move up through the grades (Polat, Zarecky-Hodge, & Schreiber, 2016). Moreover, researchers have found that vocabulary and morphological awareness are crucial to reading comprehension for English Learners, and

academic vocabulary knowledge is important for predicting EL's reading comprehension ability (Grasparil & Hernandez, 2015; Zhang & Shulley, 2017)). In fact, research suggests ELs benefit from vocabulary instruction to improve reading comprehension (August, Artzi, Barr, & Francis, 2018; Scott, 2015; Wessels, 2011). As a result of this research, I decided that extended vocabulary instruction was a promising practice to improve reading comprehension of English Learners.

While researching vocabulary instruction for ELs, I discovered that some instructional models for vocabulary instruction were more effective than others. For example, extended vocabulary was shown to be more effective for ELs than embedded lessons (August, Artzi, Barr, & Francis, 2018; Jozwik & Douglas, 2017). In addition, EL students benefited from engaging vocabulary lessons that involved collaboration and discussion (Scott, 2015; Shintani, 2012). Mindful of this research, I created extended vocabulary lessons that included student engagement in order to improve EL's reading comprehension.

In addition to investigating promising practices, I also examined educational theory. The two theorists Geneva Gay and L.S. Vygotsky have uniquely examined how students learn. Vygotsky (1978) developed the theory of the zone of proximal development which describes how students can only reach their highest learning potential through the construction of knowledge with their peers. This theory led me to construct lessons that included collaboration and discussions. Similarly, Gay's (2000) theory of culturally responsive teaching was essential in creating lessons that were mindful of culture and race by attempting to address different learning styles and modes of communication. Likewise, I also included literature that reflected students' racial and linguistic backgrounds as well as the countries their families immigrated from.

The intervention was done over nine weeks and included seven weeks of instruction. The first week I notified parents and assessed students. The seven weeks of instruction included extended vocabulary lessons that focused on student engagement and collaboration. The intervention was done four times a week, 40 minutes a day in my ELD class. There were 19 students in the class and included third, fourth, and fifth graders. The final week of the research project included post-assessments.

Using a triangulation of data, I examined students' reading comprehension. In addition, I used quantitative methods to examine the three data points, and I used the measures of central tendency by examining the mean and mode of each assessment. I found that two out of the three measures showed an improvement in reading. However, one data point demonstrated little improvement. During the intervention, I took field notes which I examined qualitatively in order to better understand student engagement, my perceptions, lessons' effectiveness, and the larger school culture. While the intervention was promising for improving EL's reading comprehension, the findings are not conclusive. Additional research is recommended to better understand the role extended vocabulary instruction has on EL's reading comprehension.

Plan for Future Action

The results from this action research project, while not conclusive, did suggest that focusing on extended vocabulary lessons are beneficial for improving English Learners' reading comprehension. I intend to continue to pursue vocabulary lessons that focus on collaboration and engagement. Similarly, I hope to be given the opportunity to share my findings with colleagues at my site at a staff meeting. I plan to continue to encourage collaborative learning in my classroom and I will expand my teaching to include more activities that place students in situations that encourage student voice and leadership.

Moreover, I plan to peruse culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000). My understanding of how my positionality may impact my teaching helped me better understand students from different cultures and backgrounds. This understanding also helped me design lessons that were more culturally relevant to students. This knowledge helped me create more engaging lessons and helped me improve student achievement. I plan to continue to improve my lessons to make sure that they are culturally relevant. In addition, I will improve the content and books students are presented with to make sure they reflect the cultures of the students. During the intervention, I did a presentation at a staff meeting in which I discussed the power of multi-cultural literature. I intend to follow up this presentation with helping teachers and the school library acquire literature that reflects the cultures and experiences of the students in the classroom.

Moreover, this action research project has helped me become aware of problematic attitudes by some staff members at my school site. Howard (2010) describes most American teachers as white monolingual women from middle class backgrounds. The majority of teachers at my site, including me, fit this description. The teaching staff at my site is 95% white. However, the students we service are 50% students of color. Many of the students of color are from different racial, cultural, economic, and language backgrounds than the teachers. To engage teachers at my site in discussions about equity and social justice, I started a book club midway through this inquiry. The book chosen for the first meeting was Robin Diangelo's book *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. The next book will be Jennine Capo Crucet's *My Time Among the Whites: Notes from an Unfinished Education*. In order to encourage discussions beyond my school site, I have invited teachers from my master program to attend the book club as well as advertise the book club on the website I developed this year.

My research was intended to address the opportunity gap (da Silva, et al., 2007) English Learners experience in reading comprehension. By focusing on extended vocabulary lessons that included student engagement, my hope was to improve narrowing this gap. Although the results from this study were not conclusive, the data demonstrated it is still a promising practice. Moreover, some of the barriers to achievement were outside my control. For example, many students were prevented from attending the intervention by homeroom teachers. I hope to lessen these barriers by working with the school administration to ensure students are able to attend English language development classes. Through the action research project, I was able to see these barriers to achievement. Looking forward, I hope to be an agent for positive change in education at my and site and beyond, as well as pursue culturally relevant teaching in my classroom.

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Appendices

Appendix A:
Multiple Choice Reading Test from ELPAC Released Questions

READING Read a Literary Passage

In this task type, students read a literary passage. Students then answer six questions about the passage.

Aligned 2012 ELD Standards: PI.B.6, PI.B.7, PI.B.8, PII.A.1, PII.A.2

Read the story. Answer Numbers 10 through 15.

1 "How was school today, Ethan?" Ethan's mom asked as he climbed into the car. She was always curious to know about his day.

2 "Fine," Ethan muttered as he began rummaging through his bag. He never really understood what he was supposed to tell her. It had been a perfectly ordinary day at school.

3 "What did you do?" she asked again, trying to start a conversation.

4 "Nothing," Ethan replied, now barely listening. He had already turned his attention to the three text messages awaiting him on his phone.

5 Ethan's mom sighed. "I'm pretty sure that I wasn't this distracted when I was your age," she remarked. "Your grandmother and I used to have actual conversations."

6 "Huh?" Ethan asked. He hadn't really been listening.

7 "Nothing," his mother replied sadly as she started the car and drove slowly away from the school.

8 Ten minutes later, Ethan finally looked up from his phone. "What are we doing here?" he asked, noticing they were at a supermarket he had never been to before.

9 "Grandma is coming over for dinner tonight and this is the recipe for her favorite raspberry cheesecake," Ethan's mom said as she pulled a piece of paper out of her purse. "I know this place will have all the ingredients we'll need. I thought you could help me find the ingredients and then help me make it."

10 Ethan groaned. He hated grocery shopping, and the idea of spending all afternoon baking instead of playing his favorite video game was not particularly appealing. However, he knew his grandmother would love the cheesecake, so he reluctantly agreed.

11 Surprisingly, Ethan enjoyed finding the ingredients, and, as he helped his mom in the kitchen when they got home, he realized that he was actually having fun. Ethan enjoyed measuring all of the ingredients while his mom prepared the baking trays. While all of this was happening, the two actually talked, and Ethan remembered several interesting things from school that had happened that day. It was great to see his grandmother again at dinner too. It had been several weeks since Ethan had last seen her, and he realized that he had a lot to tell her.

12 "Wow, Ethan, I don't think I've heard you speak this much in a long time," Ethan's mom teased as she brought out the raspberry cheesecake that she and Ethan had prepared.

13 "Well, look who's talking, Norah!" Ethan's grandmother said gently to his mother. "When you were Ethan's age, you used to spend your whole life in your room! And when I asked you how school was, you'd just shrug or say nothing."

14 Ethan's mother turned pink. "That's not true!" she protested.

15 "In fact," Ethan's grandmother winked at Ethan, "I had to get her to help me make this very raspberry cheesecake to even get her to talk to me."

16 From the other side of the room, Ethan's phone beeped. But Ethan realized that this conversation with his mother and grandmother was much more interesting.

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10 **What is the main theme of the story?**

A Learning about ancestors can be interesting.

B Working hard at something can be very rewarding.

C Enjoying activities together can make relationships stronger.

D Technology can make it easier to keep in touch with friends.

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11 **What word best describes Ethan's attitude at the beginning of the story?**

A disappointed

B independent

C confident

D distant

12 **Why does Ethan's mother sigh in paragraph 5?**

A She is frustrated that Ethan is not talking to her.

B She is annoyed that Ethan brought his phone to school.

C She is unhappy because she misses Ethan's grandmother.

D She is tired and not looking forward to driving for a long time.

13 **What can be inferred about Ethan during the car ride to the supermarket?**

A He was looking forward to baking with his mom.

B He was expecting to go to a new supermarket.

C He spent the whole time using his phone.

D He was listening to music on his phone.

14 **Why is paragraph 11 important to the story?**

A It serves to change the tone of the story.

B It identifies a conflict between the characters.

C It creates suspense by placing the characters in an unfamiliar environment.

D It provides more information about an idea mentioned in the previous paragraph.

15 **What does Ethan's grandmother MOST LIKELY mean when she says, "Well look who's talking" to Ethan's mother?**

A She is informing Ethan's mother that Ethan is talking.

B She is reminding Ethan's mother that she used to be like Ethan.

C She is telling Ethan's mother not to interrupt when Ethan is speaking.

D She is agreeing with Ethan's mother that Ethan does not talk very much.

17 **Read this sentence from paragraph 2.**

Over time, the right to vote was extended to more and more people.

What does the word extended MOST LIKELY mean in the sentence?

A continued

B straightened

C given

D shown

18 **Why does the author mention Martin Luther King, Jr. and Susan B. Anthony?**

A They were part of a small group of voters.

B They worked hard to win elections.

C They invented the secret ballot.

D They helped many people become voters.

19 **Which sentence from the text BEST describes how people voted in the past?**

A Although some practices remain the same, some voting practices have changed over time.

B With more people voting, new practices were needed.

C They would raise their hands or voices to show who they wanted to vote for.

D In other places, paper ballots have been replaced with voting machines.

Appendix B:
Running Record Assessment

Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels
Levels L-Z+ (Fiction/Narrative)

Level Q

Scoring the Running Record for Accuracy and Oral Reading Fluency

Total miscues including self-corrected: ____

Self-corrections: ____

Miscues reader did not self-correct: ____

Accuracy Rate: Circle the number of miscues per 100 words the reader did not self-correct.

100 Words	100%	99%	98%	97%	96%
	0 miscues	1 miscue	2 miscues	3 miscues	4 miscues
95%	94%	93%	92%	91%	90%
5 miscues	6 miscues	7 miscues	8 miscues	9 miscues	10 miscues

- 96%-100% = independent reading level of accuracy
- 90%-95% = instructional reading level of accuracy

Oral Reading Fluency Scale – *Circle the Level that Best Describes the Student's Oral Reading* ***Note: Oral Reading Fluency is not taken into account until Level K for determining reading level, though it should of course be considered and taught into at earlier levels.***

Fluent	**Level 4**	Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions, and deviations from text may be present, these do not appear to detract from the overall structure of the text. Preservation of the author's syntax is consistent. Most of the text is read with expressive interpretation. Pace is consistently conversational.
	Level 3	Reads primarily in three or four-word phrase groups. Some small groupings may be present. However, the majority of phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax of the author. Some expressive interpretation is present; this may be inconsistent across the reading of the text. The pace is mixed: there is some faster and some slower reading.
Non fluent	**Level 2**	Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three or four-word groupings. Some word-by-word reading may be present. Word groupings may seem awkward and unrelated to larger context of sentence or passage. Beginning a little expressive interpretation, frequently first seen when reading dialogue. The pace is somewhat slow.
	Level 1	Reads primarily word-by-word. Occasional two-word or three-word phrases may occur—but these are infrequent and/or they do not preserve meaningful syntax. No expressive interpretation. The pace is noticeably very slow.

Adapted from: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Oral Reading Study and Zutell and Rasinski's Multidimensional Fluency Scales (Zutell, J., & Rasinski, T. V. (1991). Training teachers to attend to their students' oral reading fluency. *Theory Into Practice*, 30, 211–217. *Please refer to the Benchmarks for Student Progress for details regarding Oral Reading Rate.*

Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels
Levels L-Z+ (Fiction/Narrative)

Level Q

Retell:

Say, "Please retell this story." Be sure to retell the important parts, and to tell them in order." Write notes regarding the student's retelling on the back of this page.

If the student has trouble getting started or says very little, you may use non-leading prompting. Examples of non-leading prompting include: What happened next? Can you say more? Did anything else happen? Make a note that you needed to prompt the student, as you will want to teach this student how to self-initiate more elaborated retells.

Use the Sample Student Responses to determine if the child's retelling and responses to the comprehension questions are acceptable. See scoring guidance for specifics regarding how to account for the retell and the responses to questions in determining a student's independent reading level.

Comprehension: Questions: *If the student's retell did not include answers to the following questions, please ask any/all of the questions that were not addressed. There are many acceptable responses to each question, some of which are listed below. The reader's response is acceptable as long as it demonstrates an accurate understanding of the text. As the reader answers each question, be sure to record the response carefully.*

Question	Sample Acceptable Responses
1. *Literal*: What does the ranger say he will do with the spare eggs?	*"Feed them to the big snakes, like pythons and boa constrictors."*
2. *Literal*: Did anybody notice that one of the eggs is missing at the end of the passage? How can you tell?	*"No, because... the teacher thanks the ranger and they leave; the ranger says 'bye-bye'; the ranger doesn't count the eggs; no one seems to notice that there are only eight instead of nine; Jack doesn't get in trouble"*
3. *Inferential*: The story says, "It might take a bird to hatch eggs, but a boy could hatch a *plan*! What was Jack's plan?	*"...to steal one of the ostrich eggs; to take an egg home with him"*
4. *Inferential*: What do you think Jack did with one of the eggs?	*"Maybe he wants to take it home and see what happens when it hatches. He seems excited about his plan; Maybe he wanted to save it from being eaten by the snakes; I don't think he thought too much about what he'd do with it after taking it from the zoo; Maybe he wants a pet ostrich"*

The Cuckoo Child by Dick King-Smith

When he had gone some way away, the ranger began to throw the fruit and vegetables over the fence. Then, leaving the birds busily feeding, he hurried back, unlocked the gate, and, pushing in the wheelbarrow, reloaded it with the more outlying of the ostrich eggs.

Jack watched all this with mounting excitement. It might take a bird to hatch eggs, but a boy could hatch a *plan*! He unzipped the canvas backpack slung over his shoulder.

The ranger came out again and relocked the gate.

In the wheelbarrow were nine eggs.

He picked one up.

"Now," he said, "where's the young man who asked that question?"

And when Jack raised his hand, the ranger said, "Here, you can go first," and handed him an ostrich egg.

Then, one after another, the ranger took the other spare eggs out of the wheelbarrow and gave them to various children to hold and examine.

"Let me!" "Let me!" "Give it here!" "Let me go first!" cried the boys and girls as they competed to hold an egg, and in the hubbub and confusion nobody noticed what Jack was doing or heard him zip his backpack shut.

"Now, now, children, that's enough!" said the teacher. "Put all the eggs back in the wheelbarrow now." She turned to the ranger and said, "What will you do with these?"

"Often we send some to other safari parks or zoos," said the ranger, "but actually these will be fed to our big snakes, the pythons and the boa constrictors. Now then, have you all put your eggs back?"

"Yes!" chorused the children. Jack said nothing.

"Thank you for your trouble," said the teacher.

"Bye-bye then," said the ranger, and off he went. In the wheelbarrow were eight eggs.

Appendix C:
Vocabulary Words

Week 1: assured, astonishment, **attitude,** especially, gradually, **practices**

Week2: **distant,** enough, **environment,** escape, fortune, steady

Week 3: gathering, **independent, invented**, sternly, suddenly, weaves

Week 4: **citizens, conflict**, insisted, protection, refuse, suffers

Week 5: commotion, discovered, investigate, moment, **realized, theme**

Week 6: approximately, **extended,** future, immediate, **previous,** represented

Note: Bold words are from the ELPAC released questions. All other words are tier two words from literature.

Appendix D:
Children's Literature by the Week of Instruction

Week 1: de Paola, T. (2002). *Adelita: A Mexican Cinderella Story. New York, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.*

Week 2: Fullerton, A. (2016). *When the Rain Comes. La Vergne, Tennessee: Ingram Publishing Services.*

Week 3: McDermott, G. (2001). *Jabuti the tortoise: A trickster tale from the Amazon. New York, New York: Harcourt, Inc.*

Week 4: Barghoorn, L. (2018). *A refugee's journey from El Salvador. New York, New York: Crabtree Publishing Company.*

Week 5: Brett, J., (1989). *The mitten. New York, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.*

Week 6: O'Brien, T., Sullivan, M. (2008). *Afghan dreams: Young voices of Afghanistan. New York, New York: Bloomsbury Children's Books.*

Appendix E:
Cloze Sentences by Week

Week 1: Francisco was sad for his Adela, but _____ Adelita filled his heart with love. Esperanza wasn't so sure, _____ after she met Dona Micaela and her daughters. Dona Micaela's _____ towards Abelita changed after Francisco died. Abelita's daily _____ included cleaning, cooking, and chores. "Don't worry. She will never recognize you," Esperanza _____ her. Valentina and Dulce looked at Adelita in _____.

Answers in order of sentences: gradually, especially, attitude, practices, assured, astonishment

Week 2: She hears it, _____ and low coming closer. They will grow strong and bring food and _____ to her village. His is big _____ to crush her. The rain changes the _____ of the village. There is no _____ for him from the rice seedlings sailing on the wind. She must _____ him or be crushed.

Answers in order of sentences: distant, fortune, enough, environment, escape, steady

Week 3: Jabuti _____ songs for the animals. Jabuti was _____ and played songs he wanted. When Jabuti saw the great _____ of birds, he wanted to go too. The had almost reached heaven when Vulture _____ swooped and turned upside down. "You offered to bring him here," said the King of Heaven _____. His music _____ through the tangled vines and floats above the treetops.

Answers in order of sentences: invented, independent, gathering, suddenly, sternly, weaves

Week 4: Half of El Salvador's _____ live in the countryside. The _____ between wealthy and the poor led to war. So, the country often _____ from mudslides and floods. Gangs forced families to pay them for _____ from the police and other gangs. But they soon _____ that my parents pay them. If they _____, they risk being harmed.

Answers in order of sentences: citizens, conflict, suffers, protection, insisted, refuse

Week 5: The _____ of **The Mitten** is sharing. The mole, tired from tunneling along, _____ the mitten. The mole _____ is was cozy and warm. He stopped for a _____ to admire his winter coat. A big owl, attracted by the _____, swooped down. A fox trotting by stopped to _____.

Answers in order of sentences: theme, discovered, realized, moment, commotion, investigate

Week 6: With a population of _____ three million, daily life for most is hard. Asmaf works, but the _____ year he went to school. Aijisha's writing _____ to other countries. I was lucky that no one in my _____ family died. There are children working in the bazaar who have no good _____. I want to teach them. The circles _____ villages, cities and small camps.

Answers in order of sentences: approximately, previous, extended, immediate, future, represented

Appendix F:
Frayer Model for Vocabulary Words