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Using the iPad with an ELL Student for Language and Literacy Learning Within an Enhanced Language Experience Approach

David M. Salyer, Ph.D., Loras College, Dubuque, IA
Mary C. Dodson, Bettendorf Community School District, Bettendorf, IA

There has been a significant growth in the number of English language learners (ELLs) in US public schools. ELLs in fact represent the fastest growing segment of the student population. During the period 1997 to 2008, the enrollment for all PreK-12 students increased by 8.5%, while the number of ELL students increased by 53.2% during the same period (Migration Policy Institute, 2010). Estimates for the number of ELL students in public schools ranges from 4.3 million to 5.3 million with ELLs in some cities constituting an average of 14.2% of the total public school enrollment (Migration Policy Institute, 2015; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012, 2014). This expansive growth has resulted in the necessity of public schools providing appropriate oral and written language instruction for this population. Specialists and classroom teachers working with ELLs need evidence-based instructional methods designed to promote the language and literacy development of their students, especially for those who are emerging and beginning speakers, readers, and writers of English.

The Language Experience Approach

The Language Experience Approach has been recommended as one evidence-based method to use with ELLs for developing proficiency in English oral language and literacy (Lems, Miller & Soro, 2012; Montero & Kuhn, 2009; Nessel & Dixon, 2008; Windsor, 2009). The approach emphasizes the child's supported production of an oral language text based on a personal or vicarious experience which is transcribed by an

expert user of the target language, such as a teacher. This linguistic production, supported within an interactive instructional context, links both oral and written language and is often used to scaffold early reading. These meaningful oral and written texts collaboratively created for reading reflect the ELL student's own background knowledge, familiar speaking and listening vocabularies, and his or her own oral language structures. With so much of the ELL student's linguistic and cognitive resources reflected in the text, there is a "natural" scaffolding provided for successful reading (Nessel & Dixon, 2008). Or in other words, texts that are culturally and personally meaningful and familiar assist the reading process (August & Shanahan, 2006).

Supporting the language-specific skill needs of ELLs. Emerging and beginning ELL readers must acquire a range of language-specific foundational knowledge and skills and learn to control and coordinate them in a variety of literacy behaviors. These behaviors include left-to-right directional movement; directing visual attention to letters, clusters of letters, and words; making a one-to-one matching of voice with print; and analyzing the sounds in words (Clay, 2001). The concurrent writing and reading which occurs in the language experience process, and the joint problem-solving which accompanies both modes, supports the acquisition of these foundational knowledge, skills, and behaviors (Doyle, 2013).

Before, during, or after the process of composing a language experience text aspects of the oral and written language can become the object of joint attention and problem-solving at various levels such as at the level of the text, word, or letter (Rasinski & Padak, 2004; Winsor, 2009). This joint attention and problem-solving in an interactive context is critical for the development of second language oracy and literacy (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005). Research suggests that beginning ELLs

should receive direct instruction in specific literacy skills and subskills such as the key components of reading – for example, phonemic awareness and phonics – without ignoring message level processing for comprehension or developing oral language proficiency (August & Shanahan, 2006). Further, direct instruction in literacy skills and subskills during the language experience process prevents those skills from being hidden among the complexities of text composition and reading (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, & Saunders, 2005). In addition, explicit skill instruction is adaptively responsive to the needs of the ELL student and is situated in an environment that is meaningful and contextualized.

iPads and Language Experience. The iPad is a digital tool that can be used to support the development of ELLs' language and literacy skills and the creation of language experience texts (Sandvik, Smordal, & Osterud, 2012; Vasinda and McLeod, 2015). The multiple affordances of the iPad in conjunction with the wide range of learning and creation apps make this language development possible by serving as a scaffold for ELLs' language and literacy learning. Learning apps support direct instruction when they rehearse, scaffold, expand, and provide feedback on the language-specific key components of reading in an interactive context. Creation apps provide ELL children with rich contextual and meaningful opportunities in collaboration with an expert user of the language to think about, produce, revise, and communicate multimodal meanings (Sandvik, Smordal, & Osterud, 2012). Further, with the range of learning and creation apps available, differentiating the content, process, and products of language and literacy instruction is greatly facilitated (Milman, Carlson-Bancroft, & Boogart, 2012). In addition, there is evidence that children do learn from these apps by making gains in such skills as vocabulary and phonological awareness, or by building more sophisticated second

language structures while creating texts (Bebell & Pedulla, 2015; Chion & Shuler, 2010; Sandvik, Smordal, & Osterud, 2012; p. 209).

The remainder of this article will present one example of an enhanced Language Experience Approach in which the iPad and non-digital tools were used in combination to develop language-specific skills and the creation of continuous texts (Roberts, 2013). This will be done by focusing on one male Marshallese kindergarten student, Isaac (a pseudonym), who was in the early stages of learning to speak and read English. Results from the Iowa English Language Development Assessment administered by school personnel suggested that Isaac was transitioning from a pre-functional to a beginning level of English written language development. The context for this work was an undergraduate teacher education course in literacy at a Midwestern college. Undergraduate students each tutored an ELL student using language experience in two half-hour weekly sessions for approximately 10 weeks.

Enhanced Language Experience Work with Isaac

Isaac was a new arrival from the Marshall Islands, having arrived in the United States just before the beginning of the school year. He attended kindergarten at an elementary school located in a Midwestern community of about 60,000. The school population was characterized by approximately 87% poverty and 5% ELL. Isaac had never participated in a language experience project before, and since he was at an early beginning stage of English speaking and reading development, his tutor (the second author) decided to approach his first project primarily as a page-based text. The non-digital tools included a journal, crayons, and markers. Small plastic animal toys were used by the tutor to interact playfully with Isaac and to use language informally to talk about each animal (Nessel & Dixon, 2008). Talking with Isaac, it was discovered that his favorite

animal was the tiger. The decision was made to have Isaac first illustrate the tiger in his

paper-based journal and then have him engage with the tutor through talk and interactive

writing to create a text about his drawing of the tiger. This initial procedure would allow

Isaac and his tutor to share the pen in the creation of the written text, and to provide any

needed problem-solving with and modeling of letters and words (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. A page from the initial language experience text. The lexical morphemes

(content words) *Tiger, eyes,* and *big* were isolated for Isaac's attention.

The visuals Isaac created on one page of the tiger, the tree, and the rocks were

helpful in assisting him not only as he created the text with his tutor, but as he read back

the written text. Though he often had recourse to a shifting memory for the text, the

experience of the visuals and talk functioned as a better resource for meaning that helped

him to recall accurately the serial order of the written words, to identify individual words,

and to confirm his decisions about words using both letter and image information. One

area of particular difficulty for Isaac was the inflectional morpheme -*s* used to mark plural

nouns. Marshallese does not mark plurality on the noun but on the determiner, and so

Isaac would read a regular plural noun as a singular noun. Due to this difference between

English and Marshallese morphology, the tutor helped Isaac incorporate plural nouns marked with the suffix *–s* into the story with a matching visual. For example, the written word *rocks* corresponded with the visual representation Isaac created of multiple rocks which helped him recall, anticipate, and pronounce the suffix *–s* (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. A page from the language experience text, *Tiger*. This page illustrates the deliberate inclusion by the tutor of the plural noun *rocks*.

Enhancing Language Experience with learning apps. Though a page-based text was created in his journal using written language and drawings, the tutor integrated the iPad and two apps as a means to facilitate joint attention on words and letter identification during the composing of the language experience text. Prior assessment had shown that Isaac had difficulty identifying the lowercase letters *b, c, d, g, j, t, v*, and *y*. The following lowercase letters were often confused: *b/p* and *d/t*. In fact, during the first weeks of instruction Isaac was only able to write accurately the letters in his name. To develop Isaac's alphabet knowledge and letter-naming accuracy, the tutor used the app ABC – Magnetic Alphabet HD (see Figure 3). This app presented Isaac with colorful "magnetic"

uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, shapes, and backgrounds. Nominal sound

effects are provided in the app. To interact with the app, individual letters are identified

and dragged out of the tray to the board (letters can be moved, resized, or reoriented), or

multiple letters can be dragged from the tray to build words. An image of the screen can

be captured and saved for later reference in the iPad Photos app. Another app, Little

Matchups ABC – Alphabet and Phonics Matching Game, was used to practice grapheme-

phoneme correspondences. The app scaffolded Isaac while he matched letters with

sounds in a customizable game format with audio hints and success sounds (also

customizable). Additional apps such as Intro to Letters, Little Writer, and Doodle Buddy

were used for letter instruction, practice, and assessment. Isaac required intensive work to

distinguish particular English phonemes in addition to accurate letter identification in his

language experience projects (see Table 1).
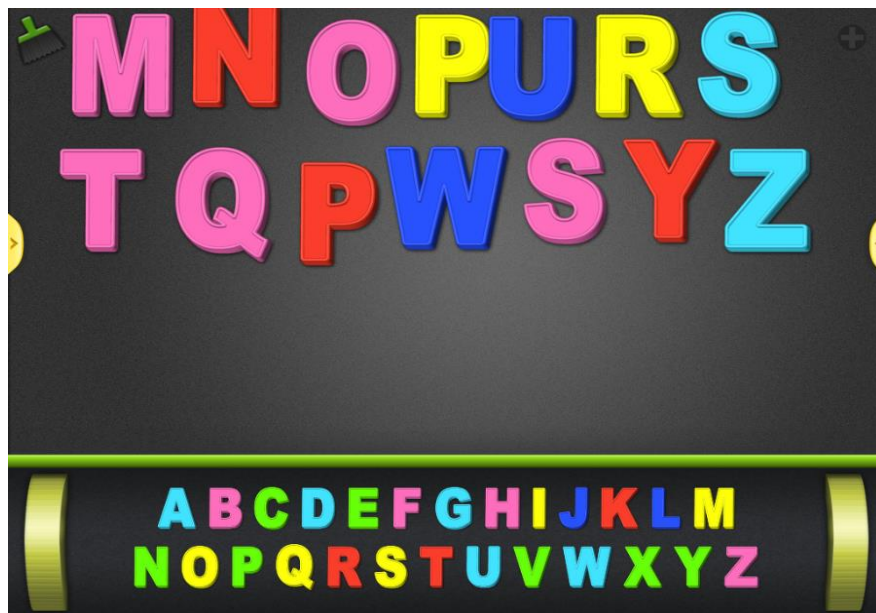
Figure 3. Screenshot of the *ABC Magnetic Alphabet HD* app with uppercase letters

displayed.

Table 1 *Learning and Creation Apps Used to Enhance Language Experience Work*

App	App Use in LEA
ABC Magnetic Alphabet HD *Dot Next*	Practice with accurate letter-naming and making words.
Doodle Buddy *Dinopilot*	Assessment of Isaac's letter knowledge, rehearsal of letter formation, and writing words.
Little Matchups ABC – Alphabet and Phonics Matching Game *Innovative Investments*	Skill practice with grapheme-phoneme correspondences.
Little Writer *Innovative Mobile Apps*	Practice with letter and word work.
Intro to Letters *Montessorium*	Tracing letters; reading and writing letters and words; recording letter-sounds; work with phonograms.
My Story Book Creator *Bright Bot*	A productivity app used to rehearse, create, and share Isaac's ebook.

Enhancing Language Experience with a creation app. Isaac's second language experience text centered on the game of basketball since he had expressed an interest in the sport, and talked about playing it a great deal in his free time. Prior to creating the text, Isaac and his tutor brainstormed a list of words that could be included in the text. The initial word list included *basketball player, shoes, black*, and *orange*. Later suggestions included *shoot, shoes, score*, and *player*. The vocabulary words were recorded in his paper-based journal.

This second project was a creation app-based language experience text. The iPad and the app My Story – Book Maker for Kids were used. This app, which has a simple interface, allowed Isaac to use drawings, photos, stickers, text, and voice to create a story. The story can be published in iBooks, shared, or read on the iPad. Isaac created

the illustrations by using the app's drawing function and touch. A stick figure basketball player with a basketball was drawn on each page. Actions varied by page, such as catching the ball or eating an apple (see Figure 4). Colors were used on each page to define the basketball or the background. A text was then created in the app using the keyboard tool (with tutor support). Examples of texts include: *The basketball player eats an apple*. *The player has a black and orange basketball*. While creating the text in the My Story app, learning apps were used to scaffold attention and provide direct instruction in phonemes, letters, and words. Finally, Isaac recorded his reading of the text on each page. Prior to recording the reading, the tutor and Isaac rehearsed the oral reading of the story for word-reading accuracy, syntax, and correct articulation of the sounds in words including the *-s* suffix. Isaac enjoyed hearing himself read and reviewing the finished product when it was completed.
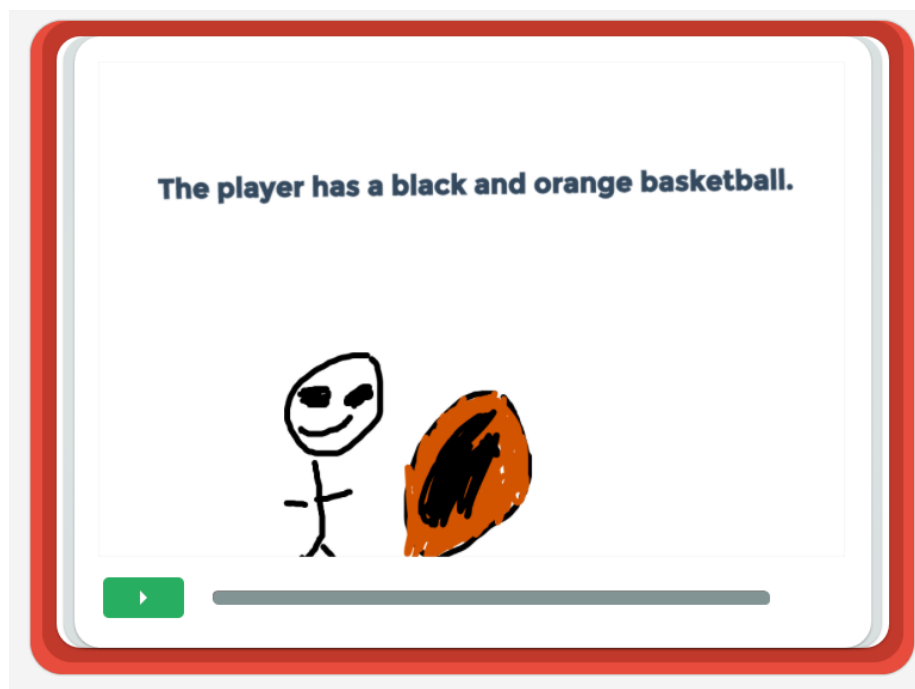
Figure 4. An example of text and drawings created by Isaac using the *My Story* app.

Conclusion

Observation and anecdotal evidence suggested that Isaac made progress as a learner of English language and literacy during the 10 weeks of language experience instruction. The joint attention on language-specific skills while composing a scaffolded text using non-digital and digital tools was a successful combination for him. Through an enhanced Language Experience Approach, Isaac was able to resolve some letter confusions (moving from accurate naming and writing of the letters of his name only, to naming and writing letters displayed for him and identifying their corresponding phonemes), become more consistent in his accurate use and reading of regular plural nouns, and expand his vocabulary.

Isaac's tutor's goal when planning for language experience instruction was to consider the desired outcome, and then to select, combine, and sequence the appropriate non-digital and digital tools to create opportunities for literacy learning. When considering a specific app, the tutor focused attention on what the digital resource might do, how it might be applied, and what possibilities it might have for literacy instruction using language experience. This process can easily be adapted to the classroom. Classrooms, whether the specialist's room or the general classroom, can be understood as an ecology of tools, practices (such as language experience), and routines (Salyer, 2015). The iPad and literacy apps can be viewed as another resource and tool in the classroom ecology that teachers can use effectively to enhance their use of the Language Experience Approach with their ELL students, particularly those who are emerging and beginning speakers and readers of English.

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Increasing the Communicative Behaviors of Children with Low Levels of Communicative Initiations in an Inclusive Preschool Classroom

Cynthia F. DiCarlo, Ph.D.,
Louisiana State University

Susanna Melikyan, M.S.,
Dallas Independent School District

Research suggests that children's interactions with others begin early in life and play a significant role in a child's social, cognitive, motor, and linguistic development (Siegel, 2012). As children grow and take on more responsibility for social interactions with peers, they develop various communication skills (Over & Carpenter, 2012). Studies of language development of typically developing children show that children effectively communicate by using nonlinguistic communicative behaviors (e.g., eye contact, gestures, vocalizations, and combinations) long before producing their first true words (Foster, 2014). Through social interactions, children learn appropriate social behavior and quickly learn what is socially acceptable and what is not (Campbell, 2002; Kister & Gatlin, 1989).

Preschoolers with special needs (i.e., those with developmental, emotional, physical or learning difficulties) sometimes do not have the social and language skills needed to initiate or maintain either verbal or nonlinguistic communicative interactions with peers, a situation that can make children with special needs, or those with less developed social and language skills, some of the least preferred play partners. The absence of basic social interaction skills limits a child's active participation in peer-group social interaction (Gerhardt & Foster, 2014; McFadden, 2012; Odom, Chandler, Ostrosky,

McConnell& Reaney, 1992). To prevent social isolation from peers, intervention to teach social communication skills to preschoolers is warranted.

Communicative initiations play a significant role for the development of cognitive and social interactions, and can be exhibited in different ways, such as verbal and non-verbal behaviors or some combination of both. Studies that have focused on the peer interactions of preschool children with disabilities have shown that the ability to interact successfully with peers is an important communicative skill that is critical to the establishment and maintenance of healthy relationships (Gerhardt & Foster, 2014; Liiva & Cleave, 2005). For this reason, any child who exhibits difficulty in social and language skills should receive intervention to increase their ability to interact with peers. Research has shown that poor social behavior may have short-term and long-term consequences; studies have indicated that poor social behavior in early childhood can lead to several other problems, such as loneliness and peer rejection, which can persist into adulthood (Buhs & Ladd, 2001; Caemmerer & Keith, 2015; Coie, Terry, Lenox, Lochman, & Hyman, 1995; Cowen, Pederson, Babigian, Izzo, & Trost, 1973; Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990). Adults have the ability to interpret the communicative behavior of young children, even in the presence of social and communicative deficits, whereas peers are usually not able to interpret these communicative behaviors.

The purpose of this study was to increase the communicative initiation behaviors of preschool children who exhibited low-levels of communicative initiation closer to that of peers, which should, in turn, increase the amount of positive peer responses toward the targeted children (Gena, 2006). There is an assumption that appropriate social behavior, as defined in the study, is a desirable outcome for children.

Method

     Setting. This study was conducted in an inclusive, four day a week, half-day program that served 18 three- and four-year old children, with equal amounts of males and females. There were 16 typically developing children and two children with identified special needs in the program. The classroom staff included a lead teacher, two graduate assistants, and two student teachers. It was organized into the following nine interest areas: table toys and games, blocks, discovery, reading, art, music, dramatic play, computer, and writing. The classroom used a project approach teaching strategy based on the children's interest. Materials were rotated regularly. The program was accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

     Participants. Participants were children enrolled in the above-mentioned preschool program. Data were collected on all children enrolled in the program. Group norms were established through the collection of data from the 3- and 4-year olds who attended the program. Children with low-levels of specific communicative initiation toward peers were targeted for intervention. Three children met these criteria. Carrie was 39 months old at the beginning of study. She was functioning within normal limits for her age according to the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (Bricker & Squires, 1999). However, she was observed to use specifically communicative initiations 3% of observed intervals (see *behavior definitions*, below). Wilson was 58 months old at the beginning of the study. He had a diagnosis of Down syndrome and was receiving occupational and speech therapy outside of the classroom. He was observed specifically initiating toward peers 6% of observed intervals (see *behavior definitions*, below). The third participant, Cady, was 49 months old at the beginning of the study. She had a diagnosis of developmental delay and was receiving occupational therapy outside of the classroom. She was observed to

specifically initiate toward peers 5% of the observed intervals (see *behavior definitions*, below).

Behavior definitions. *Communicative initiation* was defined as the target child's verbal or nonverbal attempt to begin an interaction with a peer when she/he is within arm-reach distance by exhibiting a behavior toward that peer (DiCarlo & Banajee, 2000; Hauck, Fein, Waterhouse & Feinstein, 1995). In the literature, communicative initiation is also called social initiation or social interaction and is described as the mutual flow of communication, interaction, or contact between the individuals, not just by close proximity (Hedenbro & Liden, 2002). Three subcategories of communicative initiation behaviors were recorded: *specific, unclear* or *negative* (DiCarlo & Banajee). Similar constructs are used in the literature, albeit under different names (*positive social interaction, low- level interaction* and *negative social interaction* - Bauminger, Shulman, & Agam, 2003; and *positive, passive* and *negative behaviors* -Kreimeyer, Anita, Coyner, Eldredge, & Gupta, 1991). *Specific communication behaviors* were defined as communicative responses associated with a clear, distinguishable objective (i.e., the particular intent of the child's communicative act was clear to the observer). *Unclear communicative behaviors* were defined as responses judged to be communicative attempts, but were not clearly or immediately interpretable. *Negative communicative behaviors* were defined as child's exhibition of unpleasant social interaction that functions to stop or decrease the likelihood of the development of an adequate social interaction such as physical or verbal aggressiveness (Bauminger, Shulman, & Agam, 2003).

Peer behavior in response to communication from the target child was also recorded if it occurred within 5 seconds of the communicative initiation. *Positive peer responses* were pleasant interactions resulting from communicative initiation from the

target child. Examples of positive peer responses included: peer looking at the child and smiling, offering materials, and/or speaking to the target child where the content is pleasant. *Negative peer responses* were unpleasant interactions resulting from communicative initiation from the target child. Examples of negative peer responses included: peer pulling away from target child, walking away from target child, making an unpleasant face and/or speaking to the target child where the content is unpleasant. *No response* was recorded if the peer did not exhibit any of the above-mentioned behavior within 5 seconds of the target child's communicative initiation.

Observation system. Observers were graduate students who were trained using written instructions and practice sessions to 80% reliability prior to collecting normative data observations (Kazdin, 2011). Observations were conducted during free play center time or outside play time in the preschool classroom by two graduate students. Data were collected using a partial-interval recording system (see Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007). Specific, negative and unclear communicative initiations of children were recorded in 15-second intervals over a 10-minute period. No response from target child or peer was recorded on a whole interval basis.

Group normative data. Three data points were collected on 15 of the children enrolled in the above-mentioned preschool. Group norms were established by averaging all children per age category minus the target children. For the 3-year-olds, specific communicative initiation occurred 9% of the observed intervals; for the 4-year olds, specific communicative initiation occurred 16% of the observed intervals (see Figure 1).

Children with identified disabilities and with low-levels of specific communication initiation

toward peers were not included in the calculation of the group norms.
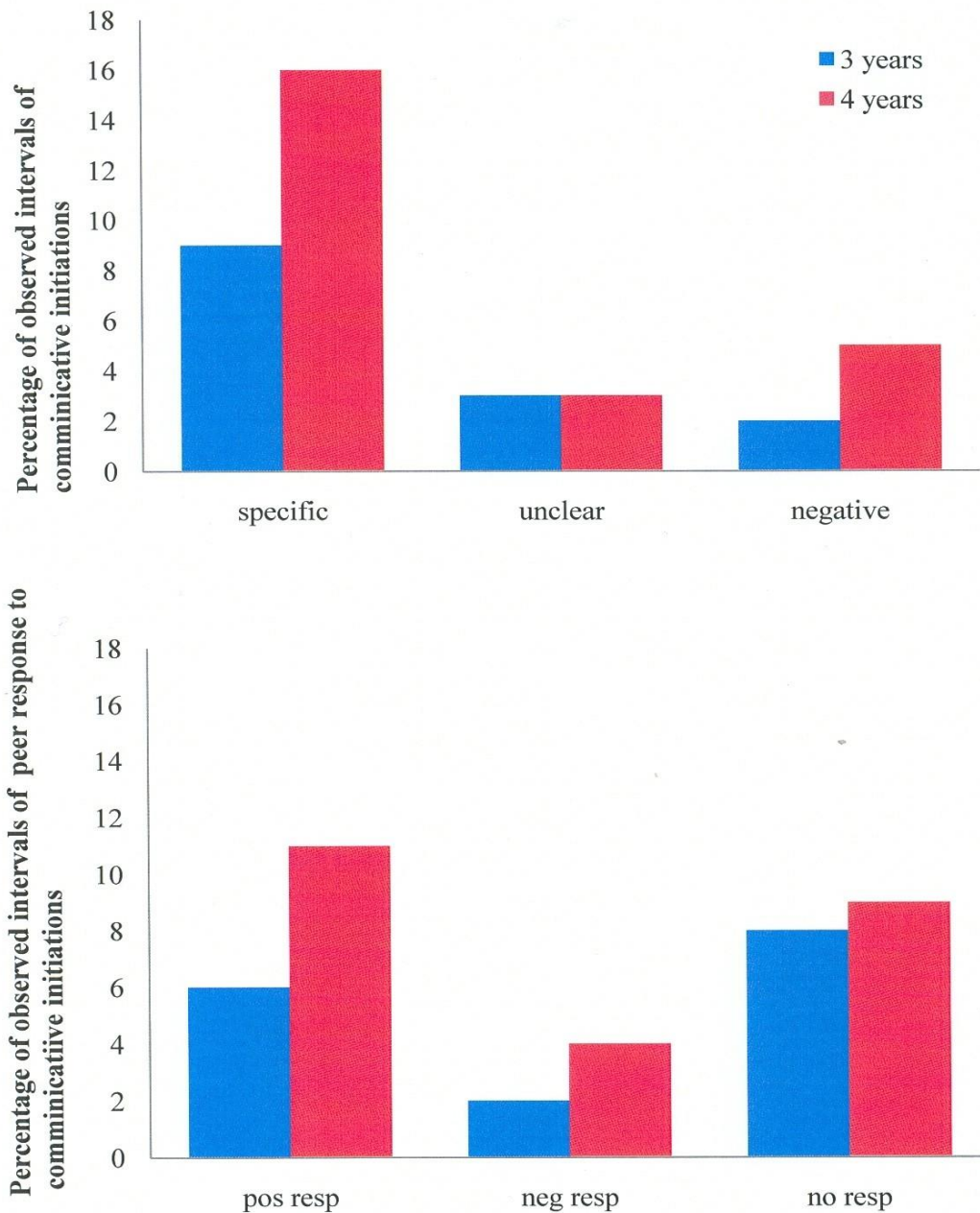
Figure 1. Percentage of Specific, Unclear and Negative Communicative Initiations Made

by 3-Year Olds and 4-Year Olds and Positive, Negative, and No Response Made by

Peers to Communicative Initiations.

Interobserver agreement for group normative data. Interobserver agreement was calculated on 20% of all observation sessions (Kazdin, 2011). Reliability was calculated on a minute-by-minute basis using the formula agreement/agreement plus disagreement, multiplied by 100%. For specific communicative behavior, overall reliability was 96% (range, 78-100); for unclear communicative behavior, overall reliability was 99% (range, 95-100); for negative communicative behavior, overall reliability was 100%. Considering peer responses, for positive peer response, overall reliability was 96% (range, 91-100); for negative peer response, overall reliability was 99% (range, 98-100); and for no peer response, overall reliability was 99% (range, 93-100).

Experimental conditions.

Baseline. Communicative initiations were recorded using the above-mentioned categories during free choice center time and outside free play time. No instructions were given to teachers and children regarding their behavior. Baseline data was used to identify the level of communicative initiations of children with low levels of communicative initiation or unclear/negative communication. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of each communicative initiation (Specific, Unclear, and Negative) and peer response (Positive, Negative, and No response) by the total number of events and multiplied by 100.

Least-to-Most (LtM) prompting intervention. A prompting schedule was formulated from the group normative data. This data indicated that on average, 3-year-olds initiated toward peers 14% of the observed intervals during free play, and 4-year-olds initiated toward peers 24 % of the observed intervals. These percentages represented the average of each group's specific communicative initiations, unclear communicative initiation, and negative communicative initiations. Teachers provided prompting to 3-year-

olds to initiate to peers every 1.5 minutes, and prompted 4-year-olds to initiate to peers

every 45 seconds to approximate the initiation behavior of peers observed in the group

normative data. After completion of directives, the teacher praised verbally for successful

specific communicative initiation with peer. Consistent with guidelines for least-to-most

prompting, teachers allowed a wait time of 3-5 seconds between each level of prompting

(DiCarlo, Reid, & Stricklin, 2003; Snell & Brown, 2000; Wilder & Atwell, 2006).

The least-to-most assistive teacher prompting intervention (LtM; Horner &

Kleitz, 1975) consisted of the following 7-step sequence: (a) material prompting (if no

materials are in front of the child give a child a material and wait 3-5 seconds for the

communicative initiation of the child with peers); (b) adult tells a child to give the material

to peer; (c) waits 3-5 seconds, if child does not communicate with others; (d) adult tells a

child to give the material to peer by showing how to do ("like this", which is verbal request

paired with a model); (e) waits 3-5 seconds; (f) adult takes child's hand and tells a child to

give material to peer; (g) adult issues specific praise statement (see Table 1). Teacher-

child proximity and teacher-child eye level conditions were added and applied before the

first step, because each is considered a recommended early childhood practice by the

NAEYC (Copple & Bredekmap, 2009; Ourso, DiCarlo, Pierce, & Benedict, 2007).

Table 1

Steps in the LtM Teacher Prompting Intervention

Teacher-child proximity and teacher-child eye level

    (a) material prompting

    (b) issue a verbal request

    (c) wait 3-5 seconds for a response

    (d) if not completed, issue the verbal request again paired with a model

    (e) wait 3-5 seconds for a response

    (f) if not completed, issue the verbal request again paired with physical assistance to task completion

    (g) praise completion

In LtM teacher prompting intervention, *teacher prompts* were in the form of a verbal, model, or physical cue given to a child to complete a task related to interacting or specifically initiating with peers. A *verbal prompt* was defined as any directive statement told to the child by the teacher. An example of a verbal prompt was the teacher telling a child, "Give this missing piece of the puzzle to X and ask if needs help to complete it (a child sitting next to him)." A *model prompt* was defined as the teacher demonstrating the desired behavior. An example of a model prompt from the above-mentioned verbal directives was for the teacher to model giving the piece of the puzzle to X and give the phrase statement for help. When it was not appropriate or possible for the teacher to model the desired behavior, the teacher proceeded from a verbal prompt directly to a

physical prompt. A *physical prompt* was defined as the teacher physically helping the child complete the task; in particular situation the teacher physically assists the child to give a puzzle to the peer. At the end of every successful communicative initiation with peers, the teacher issued a *praise statement*, which was defined as any encouraging statement that acknowledged the child's completed directive. An example of a praise statement was the teacher telling a child (after completing a directive), "Thank you for helping X; together you can easily complete the puzzle." Teachers were given the instructions of the intervention in the written form; the example scenarios were discussed prior to implementing the intervention. An additional component of the data collection system during the intervention was the notation of which level of prompt was required by the teacher for the target child to complete the specific communicative behavior. The responses from peers also were recorded during intervention sessions.

Interobserver agreement was calculated on 20% of all observation sessions for child behaviors (Kazdin, 2011). Reliability was calculated on a minute-by-minute basis using the formula agreement/agreement plus disagreement, multiplied by 100%. For specific communicative behavior, overall reliability was 100% (range, 98-100); for unclear communicative behavior, overall reliability was 100% (range, 98-100); for negative communicative behavior, overall reliability was 100%. For peer responses, for positive peer response, overall reliability was 100% (range, 98-100); for negative peer response, overall reliability was 100% (range, 98-100); and for no peer response, overall reliability was 99% (range, 98-100).

Interobserver agreement checks were conducted on 20% of intervention sessions for teacher behaviors using a minute-by-minute agreement ratio assessing whether there was an agreement on each instance of the particular prompting. For verbal prompting, overall

reliability was 100% (range, 100-100%); for model prompting, overall reliability was 100%; and for physical prompting, overall reliability was 94% (range, 62-100%), for the independent exhibition of specific communicative initiations by the target children, overall reliabilty was 98% (range, 89-100%).

Fidelity checks were conducted to ensure that the steps of the LtM teacher prompting intervention were correctly implemented. For Carrie, the teachers' implemented the LtM teacher prompting intervention with an average of 90% fidelity; for Wilson, teachers' implemented the LtM teacher intervention with an average of 91% fidelity; and for Cady, teachers' implemented the LtM teacher intervention with an average of 100% fidelity.

Results

This study examined the effects of LtM teacher prompting intervention on the communicative behavior of children with low levels of communicative initiations toward peers. The aim of this study was to increase the specific communicative behaviors of target children, which should, in turn, increase the amount of positive peer responses toward the targeted children. Results suggest that the intervention produced an increase in the specific communication skills of all 3 of the target children. Additionally, increases in the percentage of positive peer responses were noted for all 3 children (see Figure 2).
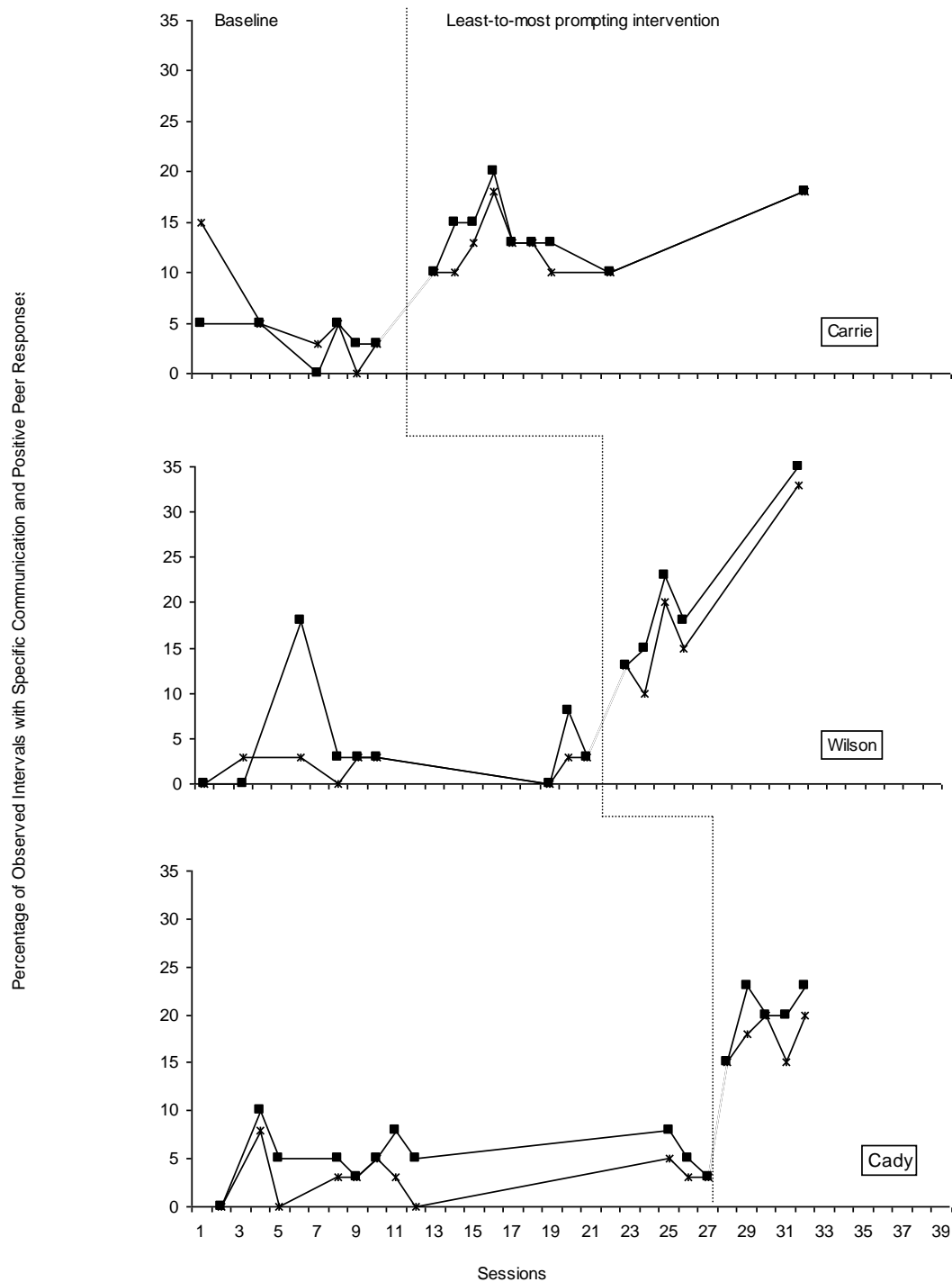
Figure 2

Percent of Sessions Observed with Specific Communicative Initiations and Peers Positive

Response across Baseline and Intervention.

Table 2

Average Percentage of Target Child's Communication toward Peers across Baseline and Intervention

	Target Child Communication					
Child	Specific		Unclear		Negative	
	Baseline	Intervention	Baseline	Intervention	Baseline	Intervention
Carrie	4%	14%	6%	2%	0%	0%
	(0-5%)	(10-20%)	(0-18%)	(0-5%)	0%	0%
Wilson	4%	21%	5%	3%	4%	6%
	(0-18%)	(13-35%)	(0-13%)	(0-5%)	(0-10%)	(0-5%)
Cady	5%	20%	4%	4%	1%	1%
	(0-10%)	(15-23%)	(0-8%)	(0-9%)	(0-8%)	(0-3%)

While all children experienced low levels of specific communicative initiations toward peers during baseline observations, each child's communicative behavior looked different (see Table 2). Carrie predominately engaged in unclear communicative behavior toward peers; Wilson engaged consistently across specific communication, unclear communication, and negative communication; and Cady was predominately communicating either specifically or unclearly toward peers. The responses the target children received as a result of their communicative initiations during baseline varied as well (see Table 3). Carrie received primarily positive responses from peers or no response from peers as a result of her communicative initiations; Wilson and Cady received primarily no response from peers as a result of his communicative initiations.

Table 3

Average Percentage of Peer's Responses to Target Child across Baseline and

Intervention

	Peer Response					
	Positive response		Negative response		No response	
	Baseline	Intervention	Baseline	Intervention	Baseline	Intervention
Carrie	5% (0-5%)	13% (10-18%)	1% (0-3%)	0% 0%	4% (3-8%)	3% (0-8%)
Wilson	2% (0-3%)	18% (10-33%)	3% (0-8%)	2% (0-5%)	7% (3-13%)	8% (5-13%)
Cady	3% (0-8%)	18% (15-20%)	0% 0%	1% (0-3%)	6% (3-13%)	5% (3-10%)

When the LtM teacher prompting intervention was implemented, all children showed an increase in both their specific communication toward peers and positive peer responses (Figure 2). During baseline, Carrie's *specific communicative initiation* averaged 4 % (range, 0-5%), and children's *positive response* averaged 5% (range, 0-15 %) of observation intervals.

During intervention, Carrie's *specific communicative initiation* increased to 14% (range, 10-20%), which was a 10% increase; children's *positive response* averaged 13 % (range, 10-18%), which was 8% increase. During baseline, Wilson's *specific communicative initiation* averaged 4 % (range, 0-16%), and children's *positive response* averaged 2% (range, 0-3%) of observation intervals. During intervention, Wilson's *specific communicative initiation* averaged 21% (range, 13-35%), which was a 17% increase; children's *positive response* increased to 18% (range, 10-33%), which was a 16% increase.

During baseline, Cady's *specific communicative initiation* averaged 5 % (range, 0-10%), and children's *positive response* averaged 3% (range, 0-8%) of observation intervals. During intervention, Cady's *specific communicative initiation* averaged 20% (range, 15-23%), which was a 15% increase; children's *positive response* increased to 18 % (range, 15-20 %), which was a 15% increase.

Data were also collected on the level of prompting within the LtM teacher prompting intervention that was required for the target child to complete the communicative behavior (see Table 4). During LtM teacher prompting intervention, Carrie completed the communicative behavior toward a peer when the teacher used verbal prompting 85% of the observed sessions. She did not appear to need modeling and only required physical prompting from the teacher 2% of the observed sessions. Additionally, when the LtM teacher prompting intervention was in place, Carrie was observed to independently use specific communicative behavior toward peers 23% of the observed sessions. Wilson completed communicative behavior toward a peer when the teacher used verbal prompting 30 % of the observed sessions. He required teacher modeling 14 % of the observed sessions, and required physical prompting from the teacher 16 % of the observed sessions. Additionally, when the LtM teacher prompting intervention was in place, Wilson was observed to independently use specific communication toward a peer 33% of the observed sessions. Cady completed communicative behavior toward a peer when the teacher used verbal prompting 64% of the observed sessions. She required teacher modeling 6% of the observed sessions and physical prompting from the teacher 2% of the observed sessions. Additionally, when the LtM teacher prompting intervention was in place, Cady was observed to independently use specific communication behavior toward a peer 14% of the observed sessions.

Table 4

Average Percentage of Applying Verbal, Model, Physical Prompting by the Teacher and Independent Specific Communicative Initiation by the Children

	Prompt level			
	Verbal	Model	Physical	Independent
Carrie	85%	0%	2%	23%
Wilson	30%	14%	16%	33%
Cady	64%	6%	2%	14%

Discussion

Peer interactions are essential to the child's construction of social and moral feelings, values, and social and intellectual competence (Davies, 2010; DeVries & Zan, 1994; Kohlberg, 1984). Studies have shown that social skill deficits, which appear in the early years of childhood, tend to become weaker or more obvious without active intervention (Elliot, Roach, & Beddow, 2008; Strain, 1981).

LtM teacher prompting intervention used in this study was successful in increasing the specific communicative initiations and peers' positive responses to children with low level of communicative initiation. This is consisted with previous research that recommends using a system of least-to-most assistive prompts to teach specific behaviors to varying ages of individuals (Barton, 2013; Mechling, Gast & Fields, 2008; Horner & Keilitz, 1975; Smith, Ayres, Mechling, Alexander, Matraras, & Shepley, 2015). Results of this study suggest that this intervention may be a useful tool that teachers can use to encourage children to increase their communication toward peers. In general, it

appears that the specific communicative initiations correlated to positive social responses from peers.

It is interesting to note that during the least-to-most assistive prompts teacher intervention, an increase of independent specific communicative initiation toward peers was observed. This would seem to indicate that the strategy of offering a material to a peer as a specific or understood form of communication was learned by each of the target children. In the absence of prompting, all 3 children increased their independently initiated specific communication toward a peer (see Tables 2 and 4). Table 2 shows the baseline levels of specific communicative initiations toward peers; due to the nature of the behavior definitions, these figures represent unprompted initiations made by the target child toward a peer; in the Table 4 the category of *independent* represents the percentage of observed intervals during intervention when the child exhibited specific communication toward a peer in the absence of teacher prompting. Carrie increased from a baseline level of 4% of specific communicative initiation to 14% specific communicative initiation; Wilson increased from a baseline level of 4% of specific communicative initiation to 21% specific communicative initiation; and Cady increased from a baseline level of 5% to 20% specific communicative initiation.

Clinical implications. Results of the current study suggest that the use of LtM teacher prompting intervention can assist in increasing the level of specific communicative initiation of children who have limited or low level of communicative interactions with peers. The use of this strategy not only increased the level of specific communicative initiations, but it also increased the response from a peer, which has positive long term effects. Eventually, teachers do not have to increase the amount of prompting, but teachers should use LtM teacher prompting intervention as one strategy to motivate

children to communicate with peers as frequently as the children of their age communicate in the same environment.

Future work. Although the current study suggests that the LtM teacher prompting intervention was successful in increasing the specific communication behavior of the target children, more research is needed. Additional research is needed to document the effectiveness of this intervention over time; specifically, are they able to generalize the skills learned in this intervention to new situations?

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      272.

Vocabulary Experiences of Elementary ELL Students: Adjectives, Visual Aids, Repetition, and Writing

Mary W. Strong, Ed.D.
Professor Emerita, Widener University

Dorothy H. Idris, Ed.D.
School District of Philadelphia

Introduction

Krashen (2015) describes students whose native language is not English as bilingual. As a result, these students have difficulty in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language in classrooms where English is the only language of instruction. The bilingual language learner umbrella includes the following categories:

- ESL – English as a Second Language

- ELL – English Language Learner

- ESOL – English as a Second or Other Language

- ELD – English Language Development

- LEP – Limited English Proficiency

- FEP – Fluent English Proficient

Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) (2015) describes the overall purpose of teaching the various language learners in schools as not only to teach English, but also believes that educational institutions must work with students from diverse backgrounds to develop constructive relationships that empower both the students and their families. In conjunction, the National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE) (2015) views the goals of bilingual education necessary to foster academic achievement while preserving the linguistic and cultural heritage of minority groups. NABE believes that

in the process of enabling speakers to learn a second language, bilingual education should also aid the acculturation of immigrants to a new society while developing their national language resources.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary development is important for all beginning speakers of English, but particularly so for ESL students. If a student does not know the meaning of the words of the adopted language s/he wants to communicate to another, his/her ability to communicate is limited. How does a student say, "I have a cold," or ask, "I am lost; how do I get to the train station?" Vocabulary development is also a primary determinant of reading comprehension. Readers cannot understand the content of what they are reading unless they understand the meaning of the majority of words in the text (Roberts, Torgeson, Boardman & Scammacca, 2008).

Vocabulary development is one of the greatest challenges to reading instruction for ELLs, because in order to read fluently and comprehend what is written, students need to use not just phonics, but context. Research on vocabulary development shows that through interactions with adults and listening to them, most children learn much of their vocabulary indirectly (Duke, 2001). However, ELL students do not have this luxury. Their parents and other adults in their lives are usually not fluent in English; they learn the vocabulary of their mother tongue. Therefore, educators of ELLs need to directly integrate methods that allow students to learn the adopted vocabulary in a direct manner by explicitly teaching skills before students read a text, such as how to use dictionaries, how to use prefixes and suffixes to decipher word meanings, and how to use context clues (Duke, 2001).

Some aspects of language proficiency are more relevant for students' cognitive and academic progress. It is essential that teachers start teaching language where the students are in their linguistic development. Additionally, in terms of vocabulary development, ELL students may have the vocabulary to hold a conversation about weekend activities, but they might not have the vocabulary to comprehend a science or social studies text. In other words, the challenge in this study was that students had life experiences but were required to learn the academic vocabulary in order to function well in school.

Project Participants

The teacher in this project had nine-years' experience teaching high school English in Japan. Instruction included an intervention that focused on using ordered adjectives to enhance vocabulary internalization. She found that the Japanese students seemed to memorize English vocabulary with relative ease if the contrived practice of repeating the target word constantly using the target vocabulary in different contexts each time it was presented. She also discovered that attaching ordered adjectives to the target vocabulary at least 10 times resulted in decisive internalization of the vocabulary word. Using this method, the students appeared to internalize the vocabulary more efficiently. Students' comprehension of the targeted vocabulary increased because the adjectives provided clarity to the meaning of a given word and an understanding of how the meaning of a word can change when used in varying contexts.

The student participants in this project were 16 non-native school students who were in the beginning stage of speaking English. The K-8 participants (seven males and nine females) were enrolled in a suburban school district in the eastern United States whose students generally scored in the top 10% of the state achievement test.

The participants were of low socioeconomic status (SES) and were of various ethnicities, ages, and genders. All of them were first generation immigrants from countries that included El Salvador, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Honduras, Brazil and Bangladesh. Disproportionate to the general student body that achieved well above average, the participants in the study did not achieve acceptable scores on state literacy assessments.

The purpose of the study was to determine how the use of intensive vocabulary instruction that included a focus on adjectives and visual images promoted language acquisition of at-risk English language learners (ELL). Language Experience Approach (LEA) activities were incorporated in sessions for the elementary students in the study, as well.

Procedures

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze academically relevant content and learning by rote memorization of word lists by the 16 participants. The PPVT-™4 was used as a pretest and a posttest. A case study approach was used to analyze in depth the results for five of the participants.

The teacher met with the 16 students for 30 minutes each day for 10 weeks. Students attended a 45-minute session in either groups of five or alone in a pull-out program.

The procedures that the teacher employed with the English Language Learners included:

(1) intense *vocabulary instruction*

(2) *visual imagery* or *visual literacy* instruction

(3) *repetition* as a vital role in the student's ability to achieve

(4) *writing* as a means of expression.

The intervention involved the use of thematic vocabulary lessons that were augmented with pictures, illustrations, and objects. The themes included self-introductions and family and friends, nouns, time, foods, animals, writing projects, the human body, transportation and travel, counting money, and prepositions and adjectives in academic usage. Students were exposed to a variety of differentiated learning strategies which encouraged them to describe words using adjectives in oral and in written forms. While participating in the intensive 10-week program, all 16 participants' vocabulary progress was constantly monitored and recorded through teacher observation and unit quizzes.

Several of the students in the study could orally read well using phonics skills, but they did not comprehend what they had read because they did not have the necessary vocabulary background and experience. Therefore, a basic requirement for the study was that vocabulary was to be taught explicitly, and the vocabulary had to be part of the daily curriculum for learning to read. Accordingly, much of the intervention class time was devoted strictly to intense vocabulary instruction.

To build the students' linguistic background knowledge, the initial lessons involved teaching the order of adjectives in the English language.
The following concept lessons concerning adjective order were presented:

1. Quantity or number

2. Quality or opinion

3. Size

4. Age

5. Shape

6. Color

7. Proper adjective (often nationality, other place of origin, or material)

8. Purpose or qualifier

In addition, the teacher gave examples and provided a chart for the students to use as a visual aid (see Table 1), which is based on the model presented on the website, MyEnglishTeacher.net (2001). Lesson topic: Using adjectives and the order of adjectives. *Advanced Learning Center.* Retrieved from

http://www.myenglishteacher.net/adjectivesorder.html

Table 1

Order of Adjectives

Determiner	Observation	Size	Shape	Age	Color	Origin	Material	Qualifier	Noun
a	lovely		square	old	blue	Mexican		woven	scarf
an				antique		Italian	crystal		glass
three	ugly	little	square		brown		wooden		boxes
my				old		Canadian	copper		penny
their	expensive		round		black	Japanese		genuine	pearls
those	decaying				red			Gala	apples
that		bulky		archaic			canvas		painting
many	fluffy	large			white		cotton	beach	towels
a few	beautiful	big	oval			French	feathered		fans

During the ten-week instructional period, the teacher employed a unit approach (see Figure 1). As to the topics of instruction, the teacher focused on practical themes in

order to augment the idea that students need applied vocabulary at the onset of their

learning English in order to navigate in their newly adopted country.

Units, Topics and Lessons

Unit	Topic	Unit	Topic
1.	Self-Introduction Introduction of Family and Friends Relationship Introduction of Others Adjectives to Describe People and Physical Appearance	6.	Writing Project Asking Questions Interviewing Techniques Publishing Newsletter
2.	Nouns verses Adjectives for Colors Shapes Sizes	7.	The Human Body Emotions and Feelings Health Medical Terms Adjectives of Feelings and Emotions
3.	Time: Days Weeks Months Seasons and Adjectives Holidays Haiku Poetry	8.	Transportation and Travel The City Reading Maps Picture This: Describing Vehicles and Machinery
4.	Foods Measurement Instruction and Directions Cooking Terms Adjectives to Describe Foods and Materials	9.	Counting Money Banking and Checking Adjectives as Counters
5.	Animals Diamante Poetry Onomatopoeia Adjectives that Describe Animal Characteristic and Physical Appearance	10.	Prepositions Locations Places House and Furniture Adjectives Related to Interior and Exterior Objects

Figure 1. Overview of the 10 units provided the lessons topics that focused on practical

social language and academic usage. The goal was to help students survive speaking English in school in in their community.

The food/cooking unit concentrated on teaching targeted vocabulary related to foods, food preparation, kitchen utensils and supplies, and measurement. The introduction to the cooking/foods unit began with motivational questions. The teacher showed students a tray of cookies and asked students to show by thumbs up: "Who has eaten oatmeal chocolate cookies? Helped make cookies? Knows what ingredients go into making cookies? Can show motions for types of ways to manipulate the cookie dough?" She prompted students to name key vocabulary as she wrote these words on the smart board: dough, flour, oats, oatmeal, raisins, round, sugar, bake, bowl, stir, mix, eggs, chocolate chips, etc. as well as the measurement vocabulary that would be applicable in the culminating cooking lesson: liter, quart, ounce, cup, pint, gallon, inch, and diameter. As much as possible, students explained the definition of each word as words were introduced and reviewed. The teacher supplied the missing parts of the definition for clarification or correction.

The teacher then distributed the target vocabulary words on index cards to pairs of students. While the teacher read the vocabulary words aloud and modeled a sentence example, pairs held up their words and/or role played the motions that went with the vocabulary for each part of the cookie making process. This method allowed the students to internalize the vocabulary so that when they actually started making the cookies, they performed the tasks easily by following the directions that they had reviewed through practice and role play. The teacher also took the opportunity to use adjectives to compare the characteristics of the ingredients. She talked about the *hard* raisins versus the *soft* flour. She showed the *yellow* butter versus the *brown* sugar. The students then made the

cookies, following directions (see Figure 2). With pride, they shared the cookies with peers in their regular classroom, but not without first recounting to their classmates how they had made them.

Figure 2. Students making cookies and examples of ingredients that were discussed.

Visual Imagery

Visual imagery continues to be an important strategy when teaching bilingual students. How do visual aids and ordered adjectives look in the delivery of instruction to non-native speakers of English? While students initially may not be able to understand vocabulary in English, they can interpret pictures, and with minimal English language skills, they can understand visual images and the messages they convey. Visual literacy, or the ability to estimate, effectively use, or create theoretical visual representation, is fairly liberated from spoken or written language, and is therefore vital to learning English (Sadeghi & Farzizadeh, 2012). Diagrams, photographs, pictorial riddles, movies, maps, charts, manipulatives, genuine artifacts and objects, gestures, hands-on activities, songs, games, and role play were a few of the many activities that were used to build visual literacy imagery. An example of visual literacy in the project classroom was the bulletin boards in the classroom that displayed charts and diagrams (see Figure 3). They were placed in the tutoring corner of the classroom where the intense vocabulary instruction of the ELL students occurred.

Figure 3. Bulletin boards with visual displays in the tutoring corner.

Repetition

One of the most important strategies the teacher found useful when teaching ELL students was to use the last 10 minutes of class to review what was covered in the lesson and determine student understanding. More importantly, the repetition and review allowed the teacher to know which points in the lesson were strong and which points needed additional review and perhaps even re-teaching. In fact, she discovered that it was necessary to review the topics of the theme about every four lessons by recapping activities from previous lessons. She was able to determine if she was moving too quickly through the material and if the students were remembering the things she had taught them.

Some teachers feel that repetition and review are uninspiring, but if the classroom teacher is resourceful, she/he will have students start with vocabulary augmented with visual and total physical response. These strategies enhance students' retention of the target vocabulary. In addition, students quickly adapt to expressing themselves using physical gestures and/or drawing a picture. Moving to an oral drill, reading the words in context through a short reading, and finally using them in dialogues and role-play activities are effective ways to review content in motivating ways. For example, when teaching a dialogue, the teacher wrote the whole dialogue on the smart board. Starting with the first statement, she asked the students to repeat it several times. Then, she added to the oral repetition the second phrase and repeated the first and second phases. Next, she erased the first phrase and repeated first, second, and third statements. In this manner, she progressed through the entire dialogue. If students appeared to forget a word or two, gesturing or showing a picture provided cues, and they were able to continue unimpeded. This procedure was followed in the whole group first. After the students became

comfortable with the process, they were instructed to repeat the dialogue with a partner. In a short time, there was nothing written of the dialogue remaining on the board, and they had, for the most part, memorized the dialogue with deep understanding because of the gesturing, expression, and illustrations accompanying the repetition of words or phrases.

The students were usually quite competitive. They seemed to derive great pleasure from vying with each other to demonstrate that they had memorized the dialogue. To keep the target vocabulary on the surface, a stack of flashcards was ever present. The teacher pulled them out frequently. For variety, for five to 10 minutes the students could play "Jeopardy", "Charades", "Bingo", or any number of vocabulary oral exercises that can be found on the Internet. The practice eliminated the tedium of simply reviewing the words orally in rote manner.

Writing as a Means of Expression for ELL Students

The ability to write automatically is commonly called writing fluency and points to the need for teachers to make certain that writing fluency strategies are included in their lessons (Anthony, 2008). Writing was an integral part of the intervention. Journaling experiences, narrative and descriptive writing, personal writing, reports, and writing poetry were included in the sessions. Writing experiences were not limited to narratives, but other writing genres were used as well. The following is a list:

1. Personal Narrative: Students wrote about events in their own lives and created original stories. They included a beginning, middle, and end in the narratives to tell about these events.

2. Descriptive Writing: Students described a vehicle of the future. Students carefully chose precise language. They practiced developing their imagination in this activity.

From a word list, they were able to use adjectives to provide more detail in their descriptions.

3. Narrative Writing: Students retold familiar stories. Then they developed sequels for stories they had read. They also extended the plot and characters.

4. Reports: Students selected an animal category and wrote a report. Students collected and synthesized information. Reports are perhaps the easiest way for students to comprehend this type of writing. This writing was objective.

5. Expository Writing: Students were able to use expository writing to explain and compare one thing to another, explain causes and effects, or describe problems and solutions.

6. Newsletters: Students interviewed staff and each other to create a newsletter. Students wrote to a specific known audience, their classmates, who were curious about what was taught in the ELL intervention program. They shared news, explored new ideas, and recorded notes.

7. Poetry Writing: Students wrote a Haiku poem. Students created word pictures and played with rhyme and other stylistic devices as they created poems. They learned that poetic language is vivid and powerful, but concise. They also learned and that poems can be arranged in different ways on a page.

Results

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize and analyze the pre and post PPVT-™4 scores. Figure 4 shows the comparison. (There is no pretest score for Student Case 7 because she did not score high enough to be recorded.) Examination of the pretest scores and the posttest scores shows an improvement for all 16 students. While the modest

increase in scores did not put the students at the same level as their peers, the students

did improve in speaking, listening reading and writing English during the 10-week study.
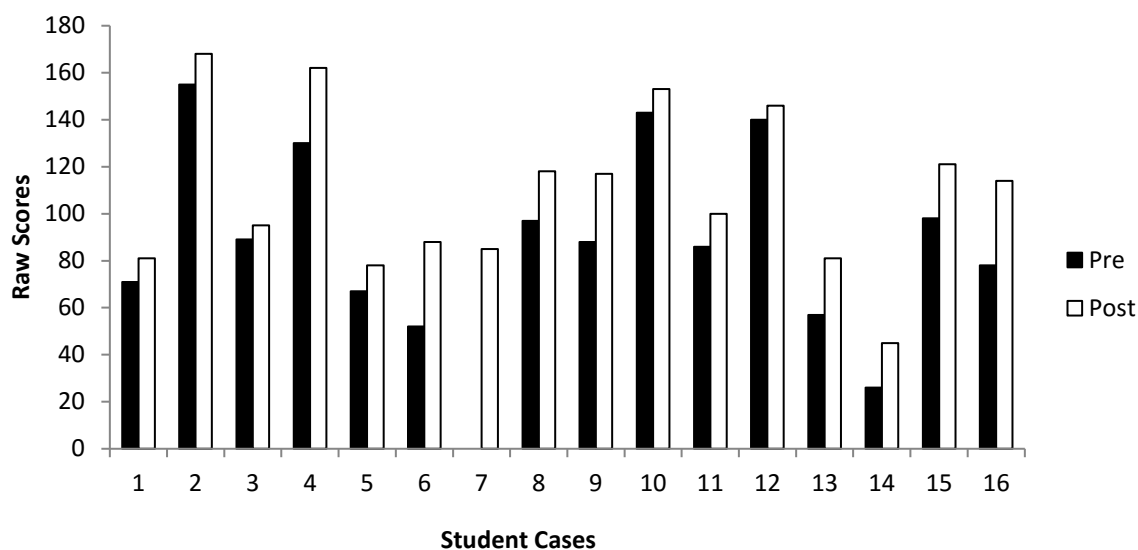
Figure 4. Students' PPVT-™4 Pre and Posttest Raw Scores.

Case Studies

Of the 16 participants in the project, five were chosen for case studies. The five

cases were selected based on gender, range of ages, ethnic diversity, unique cultural and

historical backgrounds, and potential for exceptional outcomes. The researcher

triangulated data from anecdotal notes, field notes, and parent surveys to present single

case studies.

Anirea: Case 7. One student, Anirea (a pseudonym), was from El Salvador and

literally walked for miles out of her country to freedom. Her father was consequently

deported to El Salvador for vehicular homicide, but Anirea had a great desire to stay in the

United States to study English. She was chosen as an example case study because she

did very well in the program and was ultimately able to tutor other students in her class in English at the end of the 10 weeks. Her pretest score (Case 7) on the *PPVT-™4* was not even high enough to be recorded (see Figure 4). She also was unique because she preferred to write in English first before speaking in English.

At first, Anirea predominately used writing as her preferred method of communicating. In class, Anirea took copious notes and knew how to research information and vocabulary. She constantly used her electronic dictionary. Anirea had little formal English language education prior to coming to the United States. However, she was well versed in the visual and performing arts, math, history, and science. She had completed the equivalent of an eighth grade education at the time of her enrollment at the target school. Because she had no firm experience in English language learning, she was reassigned to the eighth grade to give her a chance to receive adequate English language instruction. It was thought that she would have a better chance to succeed academically once she entered an American high school.

Anirea wrote assignments in Spanish (see Figure 5) before she would write and then read them in English. This technique seemed to aid her in code switching. Most students in the study preferred to speak in English first before writing in English.

Introduction of Self and Others

Mi vida es bonita aunque aveces paso por pruebas pero Dios siempre esta para ayudarme y fortalecerme el siempre me fortalece y es muy importante comprender que si puedes hacerlo todo aunque paresca dificil.

Mi vida en el viaje, para llegar a los Estados Unidos, fue divertida pero tambien triste porque hize un gran sacrificio para poder estar con mi papa y que mi familia, y todos estuvieramos juntos pero depronto cambio la historia. Cuando veniamos en el camino y lla para cruzar el desierto caminamos bastante el cansancio y la debilidad me agotaba, mas bien, nos agotaba a mi y a mi hermana, en el dia el sol agotante y mas en un arbol sin hojas, la tierra se sentia como vapor y cuando se llegaron las 5:00 de la tarde seguimos caminabamos todos; rapidamente, de noche fue tanto el cansancio que me desmalle, no tenia fuerzas pero en ese momento Dios me dio fuerzas y aso es como estoy aqui.

El Salvador Mi historia es bonita por primera ves fue a una escuela en el lugar. Hoja de Sal era muy bonito y dibertido luego mis padres hizieron una casa en el lugar, El Naranjo, fui a una escuela grande y bonita aprendi mucho. Dios me dio la oportunidad de trabajar como lider de misioneritas de las Iglesia Asambleas de Dios, todo fue hermoso.

Anirea's memorized translation for presentation to class

My life is beautiful, but sometimes step by testing, but God always is to help me and strengthened me the always gives me strength and is very important to understand that if you can do it all but seems difficult.

My life in travel, to get to the United States, was fun but sad also because I made a great sacrifice in order to be with my dad and my family, and all together we were but destiny changed history. When had been on the road and all to cross the desert walk enough fatigue and weakness I exhausted, rather, we ran out to me and my sister, on the day the burning sun and more in a tree without leaves, Earth is felt as steam and when came over the 5:00 in the afternoon we continue all all the night; quickly, at night was so tired that I felt bad for me, I had no forces but at that time God gave me forces and so that is how I am here.

El Salvador My story is pretty for the first time was a school in the place. Sheet of salt was very nice and diverted then my parents made a house instead, El Naranjo. I went to a big school and learned pretty much. God gave me the opportunity to work as leader of the Assemblies of God Church Missionettes, everything was beautiful.

Official Translation by Spanish Teacher: Official School Translator

My life is beautiful- though sometimes difficult, but God is always there to help me and strengthen me, and he always gives me strength. It is very important to understand that you can do it all, even if it seems too difficult.

During the time I traveled to the United States, it was fun, but also sad. I made a great effort to be with my dad and with my family and to make sure we were all together, but all of a sudden, it all changed. As we traveled on and approached the desert, we walked a long distance. Exhaustion and weakness overtook me, actually, for both my sister and me. During the day, the sun was relentless bearing down on me as if on a bare tree without leaves. The earth felt like it was made of vapor. When it turned 5:00PM, we continued walking. Suddenly, I was so tired that I fainted as night came upon us. I had no strength, but God gave me the strength to go on, and so I am here.

El Salvador. My story is nice. I attended the local school for the first time. "Hoja de Sal" was a pretty and fun place. My parents built a home there, in the neighborhood of "El Naranjo." I attended a large school there and I learned a lot. God gave me the opportunity to work as the Missionary Leader of the Assemblies of God Church. Everything was beautiful.

Figure 5. Anirea's story about herself in Unit 1.

Aneria's first assignment included an oral demonstration component to be presented in front of the class. She used an electronic dictionary to render her original writing into English, as shown in the red highlighted text in Figure 5. Afterward, she memorized the English version and practiced delivery because she had a strong Spanish accent. Since her translation was based on her limited understanding of the various contexts in which words could be defined, her English was a bit awkward, and the syntax was to some extent superficial.

Typically, students like Anirea can have a difficult time incorporating their ability to learn conversational English into writing. Herrera, Perez, and Escamilla (2010) assert that the skills that allow a student to understand and/or speak English do not automatically transfer to writing (p. 193). The authors state that writing is an output activity and, thus, is more complex than either listening or speaking. However, for Anirea, comprehensible input did not produce the ability to talk without significant effort. For Anirea, output of language was as important (if not more important) as language input as described by Anthony (2008) who defines "output" as the product of learning, in instances when students answer a question or take a test. When Anirea was producing language in output activities, she was accessing her knowledge of words, syntax (word order), and morphology (word forms). It was clear from Anirea's writing, although experimental and peppered with many blunders that she was trying to see how words go together.

Just participating in output activities, such as speaking and writing, helped ELLs practice ways to use English in different contexts. Anthony (2008) suggests that output activities, such as writing, need to be practiced so that they become automatic. For Anirea, writing was her preferred way of communicating. This student's pattern of communicating was different from the norm, thus highlighting the idea that students learn differently. While writing is usually the last form of language communication that is mastered, for this student, it was the first; speaking was last.

Conclusion

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary 4 Test (PPVT-™4) was administered to students as a pre and posttest. The researchers hypothesized that students receiving intensive remediation would increase their vocabulary and reading comprehension scores on the PPVT-™4. Analysis of the data was achieved via a triangulation of parental surveys, class observations, anecdotal notes, unit quizzes and descriptive statistics. The study indicated that when robust vocabulary instruction incorporating lessons on adjective order and clarified by visual images were taught routinely and consistently, students' vocabulary ability and reading comprehension improved. These applications can easily be implemented in the general classroom. Most interesting was that regardless of the age, ethnicity, or gender, students were able to relate to this language teaching approach and respond appropriately.

Generalization of the project results to a broad population was not possible because advancement in standard testing scores was not confirmed. However, the progress of five students was chronicled in detail to provide practical examples of the educational and social conditions impacting the students' ability to learn English

vocabulary, reading, and language. The five case studies humanized the study's concepts and suggested that the findings had practical applications.

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From the Field:

Building the Cradle to College Pipeline through Family Literacy

Michelle Fazio-Brunson
Northwestern State University

Brett Brunson
Natchitoches District Defender

Louisiana is known for many things, among them: beignets, gumbo, and Mardi Gras. Sadly, Louisiana is also the world's prison capital (Chang, 2012). Simply put, more people per capita are incarcerated in this state (approximately 40,000) than anywhere else in the world. Like other states, Louisiana spends more money annually on each prisoner (about $17,000) than on each student (less than $10,000) (U. S. Census Data & Vera Institute of Justice, 2016). With so much money allocated to prison budgets, less money is available for "some of the very things that might keep people out of the prison system in the first place — like early childhood programs, schools, after-school programs, and recreation programs" (Chang, 2012, para. 16).

The Role of Poverty in the Cradle to Prison Pipeline

In Louisiana, most prisoners come from poverty-stricken backgrounds. Researchers attribute this to the domino effect of poverty. In essence, children born into poverty experience stress, and this stress has irreparable toxic effects on early brain development, such as decreased IQ, the inability to control one's behavior, and limited attention span. Such disadvantages lead poverty-stricken children to start school behind, and they stand little chance of catching up with their peers. With limited attention spans,

they cannot sit still long enough to learn the alphabet, and without letter/sound knowledge, they cannot learn to read. If they fail to read on grade level, they are more likely to drop out of school, and once they drop out of school, they are more likely to be incarcerated and less likely to go to college (American Leadership Forum, n.d.). This detrimental cycle has been termed the ***Cradle to Prison Pipeline*** (Children's Defense Fund, n.d.).

While poverty is a significant predictor of entering the Cradle to Prison Pipeline, other risk factors have been identified. For example, male babies enter the pipeline when they are born to single mothers, especially mothers with no high school diploma. These babies are even more at risk if they are born into families with no positive male role model or if they have fathers who have been incarcerated. Another significant predictor in the equation is race; males from minority backgrounds are more likely to be incarcerated than their Caucasian peers. Considering the males born in 2001, the chances of being incarcerated are 1 in 3 for African-Americans, 1 in 6 for Hispanics, and 1 in 17 for Caucasians (Children's Defense Fund, n.d.).

Increasing Family Literacy to Remap the Cradle to Prison Pipeline to the Cradle to College Pipeline

Nationally, 48% of families with infants and toddlers live below the federal poverty level, and in Louisiana, the rate is even higher at 55% (ZERO TO THREE, 2016). Disheartened with these statistics, our jobs as the Director of Graduate Early Childhood Programs at Northwestern State University (NSU) and the Natchitoches District Defender, respectively, led us on a quest to identify those at risk and provide positive intervention. Partnering with a nearby parish where the child population living in poverty is 34% (Louisiana Public Defender Board, 2012), we discovered that over 10% (11 out of 118) of the preschoolers in one program had at least one parent in prison.

To combat these statistics, we designed a service learning project at NSU. We began by educating Early Childhood Education majors on the Cradle to Prison Pipeline and the role literacy plays in remapping the pipeline to a Cradle to College Pipeline. We then invited the college students to donate school supplies. Word spread quickly, and other groups expressed interest in helping. Thus, we issued a call across campus to elicit support for the project (see Figure 1).
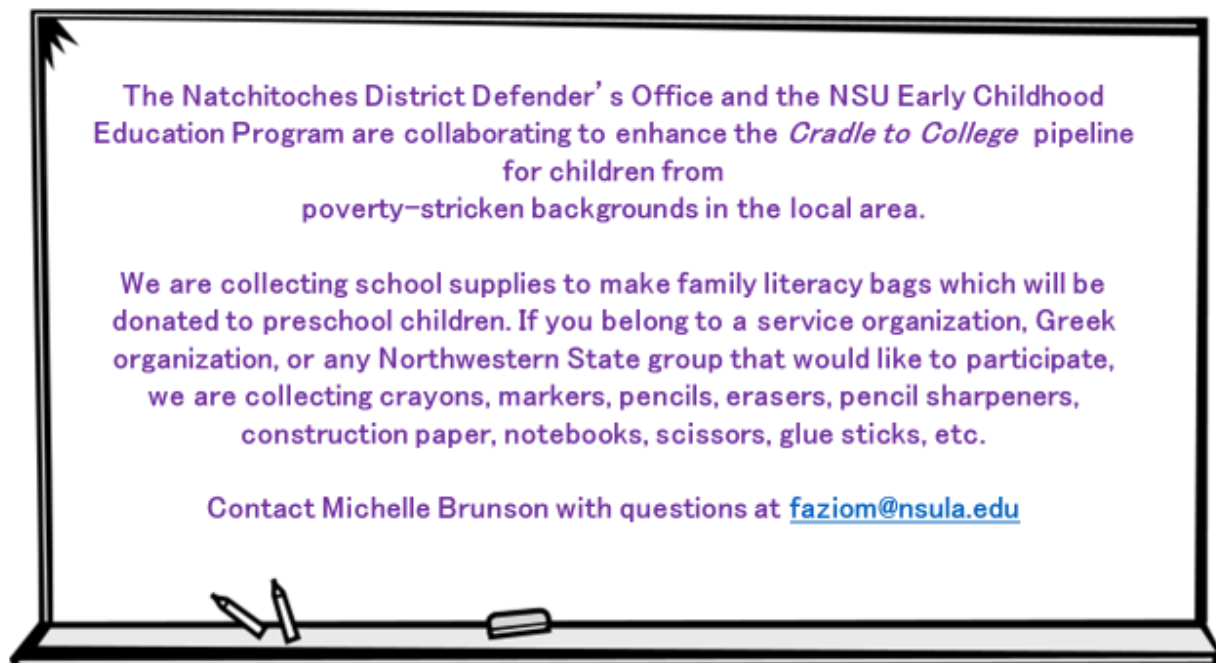
The Natchitoches District Defender's Office and the NSU Early Childhood Education Program are collaborating to enhance the *Cradle to College* pipeline for children from poverty-stricken backgrounds in the local area.

We are collecting school supplies to make family literacy bags which will be donated to preschool children. If you belong to a service organization, Greek organization, or any Northwestern State group that would like to participate, we are collecting crayons, markers, pencils, erasers, pencil sharpeners, construction paper, notebooks, scissors, glue sticks, etc.

Contact Michelle Brunson with questions at faziom@nsula.edu

Figure 1: Call for NSU groups to support the Cradle to College project.

Early Childhood and Elementary Education majors, along with students in multiple fraternities and sororities, collected school supplies (e.g., notebooks, crayons, scissors, glue, pencils, erasers, rulers, and folders), which were coupled with children's books and then organized into family literacy bags. Resources were added to educate parents on the important role they play in literacy development and why they need to read to their children for a minimum of 20 minutes each day. Suggestions were provided to guide their reading experiences, such as finding the cover, back, and spine of the book; identifying

the author and illustrator and their roles; and discussing story sequence. See Figure 2 for a photo of preschool faculty member and supervisor who accepted the family literacy bags we donated.

Figure 2: Preschool faculty member and supervisor who accepted the donated family literacy bags.

Discussion

The domino effect of poverty has been well-documented in research on the cradle to prison pipeline (Edelman, 2007; McLester, 2011). However, research also shows that through early intervention, the Cradle to Prison Pipeline can be remapped to the Cradle to College Pipeline (McLester, 2011). Essentially, if children from poverty-stricken families have the resources necessary to build a print-rich environment, and if parents understand their role in facilitating early literacy, these children can begin school ready to learn. If they begin school ready to learn and are able to read on grade level, they are likely to graduate

from high school. Upon high school graduation, they are more likely to attend college than to be incarcerated.

While this service learning project alone is not sufficient to ensure success for all children involved, it is one piece of a much larger puzzle. The families enrolled in this preschool program are privy to Head Start funds which provide proper nutrition and resources for the children and parent education for the guardians. Additionally, the families participate in family literacy activities funded through grants, and the children have access to healthcare. We plan to sustain this project in the years to come with hope that through longitudinal intervention, access to literacy materials will help families develop a love for reading that may help them bootstrap out of poverty and pave a brighter path for their future.

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From the Field:

Close Reading Experiences and Tier 3 Intervention

Deborah Williams
Stephen F. Austin State University

Introduction

Recent attention has been given to close reading since adoption of the *Common Core State Standards (CCSS),* and the literature has focused on fluent readers, adolescent literacies (Hinchman & Moore, 2013), and various disciplines in higher education. Cummins (2013) defined *close reading* as the ability to "analyze text at the word, phrase, or paragraph level. As the reader analyzes the text, he or she determines which details are most important and how these fit together logically to convey the author's central ideas or themes" (p. 1). While many have adopted this type of instruction, close reading has generated some dispute as various stakeholders discuss the merits of this approach (Fisher & Frey, 2012). Some stakeholders have questioned whether close reading is an appropriate framework to use in the elementary grades since young children hone word recognition and other skills that are crucial to learning to read while elementary teachers continue to contemplate how to present children with complex reading materials when they read below grade level.

In an effort to provide useful information to elementary teachers regarding close reading and struggling readers, this article details how an interventionist used short close reading passages to increase struggling readers' fluency, word study, and comprehension skills. Built on Fisher, Frey, and Lapp's (2012) premise that, "text difficulty is reduced over

time when students only read things they can" (p. 6), this study sought to explore close reading with third grade children who struggled with learning to read and also to expose them to grade level texts.

Specifically, the interventionist in this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What similarities and differences occurred in students' fluency levels in reading on the DRA2 after exposure to close reading passages?

2. What similarities and differences occurred with students' reading comprehension on the STAAR after exposure to close reading passages?

3. What similarities and differences emerged from the students' close reading assignments?

Review of Literature

   A closer look at Fisher and Frey's findings. Fisher and Frey (2012) collaborated with high school and elementary teachers about close reading to determine if it is an appropriate framework to employ with elementary students. The 10 English, science, and social studies secondary teachers who participated in the collaboration were all certified teachers who implemented close reading in their instruction. Additionally, the principal in the target school identified highly effective K-6 elementary teachers to participate in the study. The secondary teachers demonstrated 10 close reading lessons as the elementary teachers observed and took notes. Each of the observations was followed by discussion between the secondary and elementary teachers. When elementary teachers began implementation of the close reading framework, field notes were collected.

   Fisher and Frey concluded that, "With some modifications, close reading is an instructional approach that can be added to the repertories of elementary school teachers" (2012, p. 182). Specifically, Fisher and Frey recommended that selection of short,

complex texts, rereading, and providing text-based evidence were specific components of close reading that did not require adjustment for the elementary grades. Conversely, other components did require modification, such as, who is doing the reading and how much frontloading, if any the teacher should provide before the students read. Fisher and Frey's inquiry serves as support for the interventions that were used in the current exploration and will be referred to throughout the remainder of this article.

Close reading in the critical literacy era. The idea of close reading dates back to the 1920's and has been explored through the decades. Richards (1929) used poems to get his college students to focus solely on the words on the page and produce the author's intended meaning with no consideration of their own experiences or other outside influences. This is considered close reading.

In 1930, Empson extended Richard's work and developed the New Criticism theory where the focus was searching for the correct meaning within the text, supporting other researchers' beliefs about what is required for critical literacy (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2012, p. 107). From the 1930s to the 1980s, literary criticism is further documented in the literature. The concept referred to as "close reading" was used sporadically in the 1990s and became widespread in the 21st Century. During this time, researchers asserted that that the roles of code breaker, meaning maker, text user, and text critic are necessary for every reader to assume (Freebody & Luke, 1990). Nonetheless, there is a gap in the research regarding close reading and struggling readers.

Close reading in the 21st century. A number of recent studies have focused on the potential of close reading. In 2009, Katz and Carlisle conducted three case studies with middle to upper elementary students who exhibited mild/moderate reading difficulties. Their intervention involved close reading instruction integrated with morphological and

context analysis strategies during reading. All participants in their study showed increases in word reading and comprehension and small to large effect sizes on standardized and experimental measures (Katz & Carlisle, 2009). In 2012, Fisher, Frey, and Lapp asserted that the use of short, worthy passages, rereading, reading with a pencil, noticing things that are confusing, discussing the text with others, and responding to text-dependent questions can support a reader's skills in analyzing and critiquing factors that influence the author and text. In 2013, Cummins summarized five essentials skills needed before a student could accomplish close reading of informational texts. Cummins found that knowledge of text structure, vocabulary knowledge, setting a purpose for reading, self-monitoring for meaning, summarizing, and synthesizing are comprehension skills that a reader does automatically without thinking. Also in 2013, a close reading framework was explored during science in both a first and fifth grade classroom to respond to questions posed by teachers such as, "How can I teach students to acquire both the skills and knowledge demanded by the *Common Core State Standards (CCSS)* while simultaneously guiding them to read challenging texts?" (Lapp, Grant, Moss, & Johnson, 2013, p. 109). They concluded that teachers can support students by providing them with annotated readings from science texts, facilitate partner talk, text-based questioning, and reflective writing. Finally, in 2015, Fisher and Frey revealed that the *Common Core State Standards* had impacted reading instruction in favor of close reading or text-dependent reading and recommended that educators familiarize themselves with key features of close reading such as the use of short complex texts and rich discussions based on worthy questions.

Method

  Setting. The current study occurred at an elementary school in east Texas. Based on third, fourth, and fifth grade students' performance on the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR), the school in this study had received a rating of low-performing in reading, math, writing, and science for three consecutive years.

  Participants. Participants in this study were three third-grade African-American males identified as reading below grade level. The school district used the Developmental Reading Assessment level (DRA2) to set benchmark levels. For example, a student who read at DRA2 level 18 at 90-94% was considered a beginning second grade reader, a student who read at level 30 at 90-94% was considered a beginning third grade reader, and a student who read at level 40 was considered a beginning fourth grade reader. At the beginning of third grade, Participant 1's DRA2 instructional reading level was 20, Participant 2's was 28, and Participant 3's was 18.

  Design. This study followed a case study design and utilized qualitative methods. The purposeful sampling strategy was employed to identify three struggling third-grade readers. The principal investigator collected and analyzed data from three sources. The classroom teacher provided participants' fluency level and STAAR scores, and the investigator observed students as they completed close reading assignments. The investigator sought to explore changes in the fluency and comprehension assessment data before and after exposure to close passages on a weekly basis. Additionally, the principal investigator explored the use of grade-level text during one-on-one intervention although participants read below grade level, based on the data. Instructional level texts were not used because the interventionist's goal was to maintain complexity while exposing students to "grade level" texts. According to Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2012), "A

fifth grader reading on fourth grade level who only reads fourth grade books will not be prepared for sixth grade" (p. 6). The interventionist applied this theory to third graders reading at second grade level and chose to expose participants to rigorous "grade-level" passages twice a week for 20 minutes.

The data were analyzed through extensive dialogue between the principal investigator and classroom teacher. Initially, the data were reviewed individually by each coder prior to engaging in dialog regarding the meaning of the data. When disagreements occurred, coders returned to the data together and engaged in discussions until they reached consensus.

Instruments. By exposing students to "on grade-level" close reading passages twice a week, the interventionist used data from the Developmental Reading Assessment 2 (DRA2), Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR), and close reading passages to answer the three major research questions.

Developmental Reading Assessment (***DRA2).*** The DRA2 was designed for grades K-8 and consists of both fiction and nonfiction Benchmark Assessment books that range from emergent to fluent levels. Four methods were explored to establish reliability of the DRA2. These methods included internal consistency, parallel equivalency, test-retest, and inter-rater reliability. A sample size of 1,676 K-8 students was used to conduct internal consistency. The DRA2 showed high levels of validity for measuring a student's oral reading fluency and comprehension, as evidenced by the data from content-related validity, face validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity tests. Data from the DRA2 and close reading passages were collected each six weeks from September to May 2015. The DRA2 was used to measure potential differences in students' fluency levels

before and after exposure to the close reading strategy. The coders reviewed the reading level for each participant's fluency level every six weeks.

State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR). The Texas Education Agency (TEA) in collaboration with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and Texas educators developed the STAAR to be a rigorous assessment with an emphasis on vertical alignment of the curriculum. Performance standards were to elementary, middle, high school, and postsecondary readiness. Students in grades third through fifth are assessed in reading and math. Additionally, fourth grade students are assessed in writing and fifth grade students are assessed in science. TEA collected data for the vertical scale study during the initial operational administration of the STAAR in spring 2012. Vertical scale questions were entrenched in the operation field test forms in field test positions. Overall, the sample size for the STAAR reading for third grade comprised 327,719 students. Summary statistics for Rasch Item Difficulties included: N=40, Mean=0.26 and Standard Deviation=0.87. Additional information on the construction of the STAAR can be found at

http://tea.texas.gov/Student_Testing_and_Accountability/ (TEA, 2015).

STAAR test scores were collected in May 2015, and data were analyzed for similarities and differences in reading comprehension for each student. The principal investigator and classroom teacher engaged in dialog regarding each participant's scores. In reference to the STAAR's score report, students were categorized as "Unsatisfactory Academic Performance" based on the number of questions answered correctly. In order to receive "Satisfactory Academic Performance" on the STAAR reading assessment, Participant One needed to answer 20 more items correctly, and Participant Two needed to answer 14 more items correctly. Participant Three needed to answer 15 additional items

correctly. Coders agreed that an Unsatisfactory rating meant that students were still developing in their ability to answer text-dependent questions. Furthermore, coders agreed that each of the four passages students were required to read on the STAAR consisted of approximately 300 words versus close reading passages that comprised approximately 50 words.

Close reading passages. The majority of the close reading passages were created by Linda Ward Beech (2005), author of the *Magic School Bus* series and published by Scholastic Teaching Resources. These short nonfiction passages focused on comprehension skills such as inferring, using context clues, comparing/contrasting, finding main ideas, predicting, and discriminating fact from opinion. The interventionist noted the number of times the students encountered a passage with each skill (See Table 4). Approximately, three different question types followed each short close reading passage. Throughout the intervention, questions that prompted close reading involved six inference questions, seven context clues, eight compare/contrast, eight main idea, three detail, five prediction, and five fact/opinion- type questions. Examples of inference questions included, Which sentence is most likely true? How do you think people feel about what the monkeys do? You can guess that _____. Examples of context clues questions were, In this paragraph the word *threatens* must mean? In this paragraph, the word *tryouts* means…? In this paragraph, the word *ruin* must mean? Examples of compare/contrast questions were, How are the trumpet and trombone alike? How are the dogs alike? How are the dogs different?

Description of a sample tier 3 intervention. Since each of the three students began third grade school year below level, participants were eligible for Tier 3 intervention. With Tier 3 intervention, the campus reading specialist or interventionist

provided students a second dose of reading instruction twice per week to accelerate literacy skills. Following the No Child Left Behind enactment (2001), the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) was reenacted to include the Response to Intervention (RTI) (2004).

The principal investigator explored the use of grade-level text during one-on-one intervention although participants read below grade level, based on the data. The interventionist sought to accelerate students' literacy development in the areas of decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension. They were presented with a brief passage each session to read repeatedly. The first reading focused on decoding, the second reading focused on vocabulary development, and the third focused on close reading. The passage below represents an example of a weekly close reading passage:

Coober Pedy is a small mining town. It is in the southern part of Australia. The temperature there is usually 100 degrees in the summer. Some people on Coober Pedy have made their homes in old mines. They escape the heat by living in underground tunnels. (Beech, 2012, p. 11)

During the initial reading of the aforementioned close passage, the interventionist provided significant scaffolding and frontloading to help a student decode the words *mining, Australia, temperature,* and *escape.* The second reading allowed the student to practice decoding and simultaneously concentrate on word meanings. After providing the student with instruction on decoding and vocabulary, the interventionist posed suggested questions (Beech, 2012) which required the student to closely read the text. Examples of close reading prompts included:

(1) Which sentence is most likely true?

(2) You can guess that the mines are _____.

(3) In this paragraph, the word escape means _____.

Results

The current study sought to explore close reading with third grade students who struggled with learning to read. Additionally, the principal investigator exposed students to grade level texts for 20-25 minutes a session twice a week. The investigator explored answers to three major questions, listed below.

Question 1: What changes occurred in students' fluency levels in reading on the DRA2 after exposure to close reading passages? The DRA2 consists of both fiction and nonfiction Benchmark Assessment books that range from emergent to fluent levels. The leveling system begins with a 1, which represents an early emergent text and progresses through level 40, which represents a fluent level text.

The coders reviewed the reading level for each participant's fluency score each six weeks (see Table 1). For instance, at the beginning of third grade, Participant 1 scored level 20 on fluency, and the coders agreed that this student was able to decode words at beginning second grade level. At the end of the second six weeks, Participant 1 scored level 20 on fluency, and the coders agreed that this student did not show growth for the first 12 weeks of school in spite of exposure to the close reading strategy. At the end of the third six weeks, Participant 1 scored level 24 on fluency, and the coders agreed that this student showed growth and that other variables such as motivation may have prevented growth during the first 12 weeks. At the end of the fourth six weeks, Participant 1 scored 24, and the coders agreed that the student was capable but did not show an increase in fluency from the third to fourth six weeks. Furthermore, coders agreed that the

type of text, structure, and background knowledge may have influenced the assessment. Participant 1 scored level 30 on fluency for the fifth six weeks and level 40 at the end of the sixth six weeks. The coders agreed that these levels aligned with the student's independent daily reading books and that this student was quite capable of reading fourth grade level texts. Fluency scores from Participants 2 and 3 were reviewed and discussed in the same manner.

Several changes were noted in students' fluency levels after they were exposed to close reading passages. According to the DRA2, Participants One and Three began third grade approximately one year below reading level (see Table 1). By the last six weeks, Participants 1 and 2 exceeded one year's growth in reading fluency. Participant 2 began third grade close to reading level and exceeded 3rd grade level by mid-year. Participant 2 showed the largest increase in levels during the third six weeks. The DRA2 level for Participant 2 during the second six weeks increased from 28 to 34. Participants 1 and 3 showed the largest increase in levels during the last six weeks.

Table 1

Developmental Reading Assessment 2 Scores

Participants	1st Six Weeks	2nd Six Weeks	3rd Six Weeks	4th Six Weeks	5th Six Weeks	6th Six Weeks
P1	20	20	24	24	30	40
P2	28	28	34	34	38	40
P3	18	18	20	20	20	30

Question 2: What changes occurred in students' reading comprehension on the STAAR after exposure to close reading passages? In the state of Texas, the STAAR begins at grade three, therefore; a before and after comparison of comprehension performance on the STAAR is not applicable for participants in this study. Third grade students are given different types of texts or genres to read and respond to multiple choice questions following each selection. For example, students must read a narrative or literary text, as well as, a nonfiction or factual text. Additionally, students may be required to read a poem or expository text. Students receive a score report with reading performance categorized as one of the following areas: (1) Level 1/Unsatisfactory Academic Performance, (2) Level 2/Satisfactory Academic Performance and (3) Level 3/Advanced Academic Performance. There were six questions related to genre, 18 questions related to literary or elements of a story, and 16 questions related to factual or informational texts.

Table 2 illustrates the number of questions each participant answered correctly. According to their STAAR Score Report, each participant in this study was categorized as Level 1/Unsatisfactory Academic Performance. Nonetheless, the investigators noted that participants were categorized as "Unsatisfactory Academic Performance" based on the number of questions answered correctly. Following an analysis of participants' STAAR reading scores, the interventionist and classroom teacher observed that participants responded correctly to a limited number of questions and agreed that participants' performance seemed at the emerging phase on the majority of the areas. Coders categorized each participant as emerging in the literary and informational categories because they answered less than half of the questions correctly. Coders agreed that Participants 2 and 3 may have developed basic knowledge about different types of texts

based on answering at least half of the six questions correctly that related to genre. However, Participant 1 showed little or no knowledge of questions involving genre or type of text because he responded incorrectly to all six of the questions that were related to genre. Coders further noted that Participant 2 seemed stronger in the beginning with foundational reading skills such as phonics and decoding, yet scored similar to the other participants on reading comprehension.

Table 2

State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Scores

Participants	Genres	Literary	Informational
P1	0/6	4/18	6/16
P2	3/6	7/18	6/16
P3	4/6	6/18	5/16

Numerator = items correct
Denominator = total number of question type

Question 3: What changes emerged in the students' close reading assignments? The interventionist sought to accelerate students' literacy development in the areas of decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension. However, limited similarities and differences emerged from the students' close reading assignments. Twice a week, participants were presented with a brief passage each session to read repeatedly. During the first reading, the interventionist focused on decoding and phonics. Table 3 shows words that were difficult for participants to decode or sound out. For instance, during the first reading, Participant 1 had trouble decoding the words *mining, wait, tour, visitors, family, railroad,* and *stagecoaches.* During the second reading of the passage, the interventionist focused on vocabulary development, and Participant 1 required

background building regarding the following vocabulary: *crane, marsupial, wombat*

Chinook, purge, Khamsin, and *Egypt* (See Table 3).

Table 3

Examples of Challenging Words by Participants

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Decoding	mining, wait, tour, visitors, family, railroad, stage-coaches	mining	Mining, mail, badger, wait, families, factories, ago, stage-coaches, weak, plates, orbiting, juggler, puzzled
Vocabulary	Crane, marsupial, wombat, chinook, purga, Khamsin, Egypt	marsupial, wombat, chinook, purga, Khamsin, Egypt	marsupial, wombat, chinook, purga, Khamsin, Egypt

Source: *Words were taken from passages, Home, Sweet Home, Winds of the World, Long-Ago Trains,* and *Meet the Marsupials* (Beech, 2012).

The interventionist focused on close reading during the third reading. Each participant scored at the emergent level in making predictions during reading and determining fact and opinion. The coders agreed that each participant was emerging in the following comprehension skills because they responded correctly to less than half of the related questions: inference, context clues, compare/contrast, main idea, and details. The interventionist and classroom teacher agreed that Participants 1 and 3 required support with decoding. Regardless of Participant 2's fluency in decoding in the beginning, his comprehension also required intervention, as depicted in Table 1.

Following discussions of the close reading activities, the interventionist and classroom teacher agreed that Participant One responded correctly to more questions

related to context clues. Participant Two responded correctly to more questions that related to inference, context clues, compare/contrast, and details. Participant Three responded correctly to more questions that related to inference and details. Prediction and fact/opinion- type questions seemed problematic for Participants One, Two, and Three (see Table 4).

Table 4

Participants' Close Reading Data by Comprehension Skills

Comprehension	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Inference	3/6	4/6	5/6
Context Clues	5/7	5/7	3/7
Compare/Contrast	4/8	6/8	5/8
Main Ideas	4/8	3/8	5/8
Details	2/3	3/3	2/3
Prediction	1/5	1/5	1/5
Fact/Opinion	1/5	1/5	1/5

Numerator = items correct
Denominator = total number of question type

Discussion

   Comparing findings with previous research. Tier three intervention for struggling third grade readers in this study entailed weekly exposure to close reading passages that were read at least three times each. The foci for the first two readings were decoding and morphology. When Fisher and Frey (2012) investigated the close reading framework, field notes from elementary teachers' observations of secondary teachers' implementation of close reading activities were favorable for elementary students. Fisher and Frey concluded that with modifications, close reading is appropriate for elementary students. In the current study, participants' reading skills increased as a result of the

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interventionist monitoring and adjusting frontloading strategies prior to asking struggling readers text-dependent questions.

The third reading of the passage targeted text-dependent prompts such as, "In this paragraph, the word escape means _____" or "Which sentence is mostly true?" (Beech, 2012, p. 11). Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2012) suggested that students repeated readings of short, complex passages for exposing elementary and secondary students to close or text-dependent reading. However, they cautioned elementary teachers to consider if the close reading passage would be read aloud by the teacher, a shared reading, or an independent reading in order to provide the appropriate amount of scaffolding for students. Repeated readings seemed to increase participants' fluency levels in the current study. The interventionist modified the purpose for repeated readings and used them to build students' decoding skills and to also increase their vocabulary.

Freebody and Luke (1990) and Cummins (2013) argue that, prior to close reading instruction, students should demonstrate mastery of word study skills. The participants in this study were still developing word study skills such as phonics and using morphemes to decode words. However, in the current study, the investigator integrated code breaking (word study) instruction with a close reading framework and the students' automaticity of word recognition greatly improved. However, Participant 2 came to intervention showing mastery of word study skills and still struggled with text-dependent comprehension.

Participants' ability to make meaning based on the text showed early signs of developing. Given the growth in word study skills, consistent emphasis on discussion and word meaning should strengthen participants' ability to engage in text-dependent reading. For strugglers, shorter close passages may have a positive impact (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2012) as the investigator noticed that shorter passages minimized the amount of

decoding and morphological energy the students used, prior to responding to text-dependent questions.

Suggestions for further research. Data suggest that the participants' fluency levels increased as a result of weekly close reading experiences. Nonetheless, with revisions to the current close reading framework, struggling readers may be able to use their improved fluency abilities to analyze complex texts more efficiently.

Based on the current findings, when providing close reading instruction for struggling readers, an interventionist might consider using only one to two text- dependent questions with varied content to impact comprehension. In the current study, approximately three different question types followed each short close reading passage such as inference, main idea, and fact/opinion.

The intervention in this study occurred twice per week. Therefore, further inquiry is suggested but with increased intervention time to three to four days per week. Furthermore, additional investigation is warranted regarding the difficulty levels of the passages. In the current study, the investigator employed what was considered "on grade level" texts with struggling readers because Fisher and Frey (2012) suggest that text selected for close reading should be at grade level or above. Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2012) support the idea of exposing struggling readers to "grade level" texts to help bridge the reading gap. The participants in the current study were in third grade but decoded and comprehended text at beginning second grade level, according to the DRA2. The interventionist agreed with Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2012) regarding text complexity and exposed participants to third grade level texts twice per week, thereby allowing students to move into fourth grade having had close reading experiences.

Further inquiry with close reading and struggling readers in the elementary grades might explore outcomes with various levels of passages. Intervention might begin with close reading passages at students' independent reading level and progress to "grade level" so that the teacher and interventionist might compare students' text-dependent comprehension ability at lower and higher reading levels.

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