

THE EFFECTS OF PRE-READING STRATEGIES ON THE COMPREHENSION OF
CULTURALLY UNFAMILIAR TEXTS FOR ADOLESCENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE
LEARNERS

by

Kristie O'Brien

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Committee:

Anne DeMuth, Primary Advisor
Bonnie Swierzbin, Secondary Advisor
Kerrie Thompson, Peer Reviewer

To My Mother and Father:
You were the sociocultural background
builders of peace, justice, and equality. The proof of
your success lies in the daily work of your three children.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“But religion class is so easy for the American students; they were raised Christian by their parents,” my student Riko¹ exclaimed to me with a sense of frustration in her voice. I hear these types of comments often at Coulee, the Catholic high school where I teach English as a second language (ESL). About twenty-five percent of the students at Coulee are English language learners (ELLs) who came to Coulee in the ninth grade. Most of the ELLs are from Asian countries with small Christian populations and most have little education in Christianity. In contrast to the ELLs’ educational experiences with Christianity, the majority of the local, native English speaking student population have attended Catholic schools and been taking religion classes since kindergarten. Considering sociocultural background knowledge plays an important role in comprehension in a second language (L2), it’s a struggle for the ELLs with little education in Christianity to be competitive academically in religion class with the local students considering roughly eighty-six percent have been attending Catholic schools since the first grade. As a result, many ELLs who generally receive good grades in other content classes receive poor grades in their religion classes. Therefore, it is essential for ELLs at Coulee to learn how to utilize strategies that help build sociocultural background knowledge and activate prior knowledge in order to be competitive with their peers.

¹ All formal names have been altered in this capstone in order to protect identities.

In my classes, I teach students how to build sociocultural background knowledge and activate prior knowledge through the use of many strategies, largely by teaching reading activities I learned about through sources written by experts in the ESL and first language (L1) reading fields. Two pre-reading strategies I use often are “what I know, want to know, and learned charts” (K-W-L charts) and anticipation guides. It came as a surprise then when I discovered that my favorite ESL resource books that promoted the use of these two strategies cited research that was conducted with native English speakers, not ELLs. Considering ELLs face different comprehension problems than native English (NE) readers, I developed the following research questions: Are K-W-L charts and anticipation guides effective pre-reading strategies for second language (L2) readers? Is either of the above-mentioned strategies more effective than the other for building sociocultural background knowledge as well as helping students make active links between old and new knowledge? I explore the answers to these questions in this capstone.

In this chapter, I first explain Coulee’s philosophy and religion requirements to emphasize the importance of students learning how to acquire religious knowledge. Next I share how various Coulee faculty and ELLs perceive the struggles many ELLs have in their religion classes to accent the level of understanding of the role of sociocultural knowledge at Coulee. Then I briefly compare the dominant religions of the international student population’s home nations for an indication of how much background in Christianity many students may come from at the societal level in their home countries. The discussions above are tied to my research questions I re-establish at the end of this

chapter. My research questions emphasize the importance for ELLs to learn how to build sociocultural background knowledge and activate prior experiences in order to be successful in all of their classes. It is also important for Coulee's teachers to learn how to facilitate the strategies. Additionally, I discuss my plan to help my students' reading comprehension abilities. I conclude this chapter by presenting an overview of the chapters to come in this capstone.

Coulee's Philosophy and Religion Requirements

Coulee's philosophy reads as follows in the school's brochure:

Coulee High School is an academic institution dedicated to teaching and living the values of Christianity. As Catholic, faith-based schools, our primary goal is to make Christ the center of all that we do. A Coulee education consists of three fundamental aspects: spirituality, academics, and student life. (p. 3)

As a commitment to the philosophy, Coulee requires every student to take one religion class a semester. As implied earlier, this requirement presents an intimidating challenge for many ELLs considering many concepts of Christianity were completely foreign to them prior to leaving their home countries to come study at Coulee. The need for ELLs without a prior education in Christianity to learn how to build one quickly is important.

Coulee Faculty

In addition, I've discovered through an informal questionnaire (see appendix A) and conversation the Coulee faculty needs to understand the role of sociocultural background

knowledge in education. Many faculty members are baffled by many of the Asian students' poor performances in religion classes. In my first month working at Coulee, the president asked me about this problem and stated, "I don't know why religion class is so hard for them; it's the easiest class for most local students." This confusion is emphasized by the fact that many of the Asian students who perform poorly in religion excel in their other content classes that are perceived as being more challenging. For example, in an informal conversation, a science teacher relayed to me with excitement how impressed she was by many of her Asian students' exemplary performances in her science class, despite their language barriers. However, science is a subject that requires little sociocultural knowledge. In another informal conversation, two teachers expressed their frustrations indicating that attitudinal factors were to blame; perhaps the poor performance in religion class is because the students don't care about or respect the Catholic religion. Others, however, said they view it as a problem primarily dealing with limited English language proficiency. Many teachers at Coulee believe that the most important factors affecting reading comprehension for ELLs are unfamiliar vocabulary words and text grade-level readability. Therefore they believe ELLs' comprehension will improve by learning more vocabulary. It's true that these are comprehension problems L2 readers face (Carrell, 1984; Taglieber, Johnson, & Yarbrough, 1988); however, the view out of the reading comprehension window is much more complicated. I would like to encourage the faculty to go beyond attitudinal factors and language proficiency issues associated with the lack of comprehension of religion content and encourage them to

explore how sociocultural knowledge impacts reading comprehension as well. My plan to do this is explored in my research question.

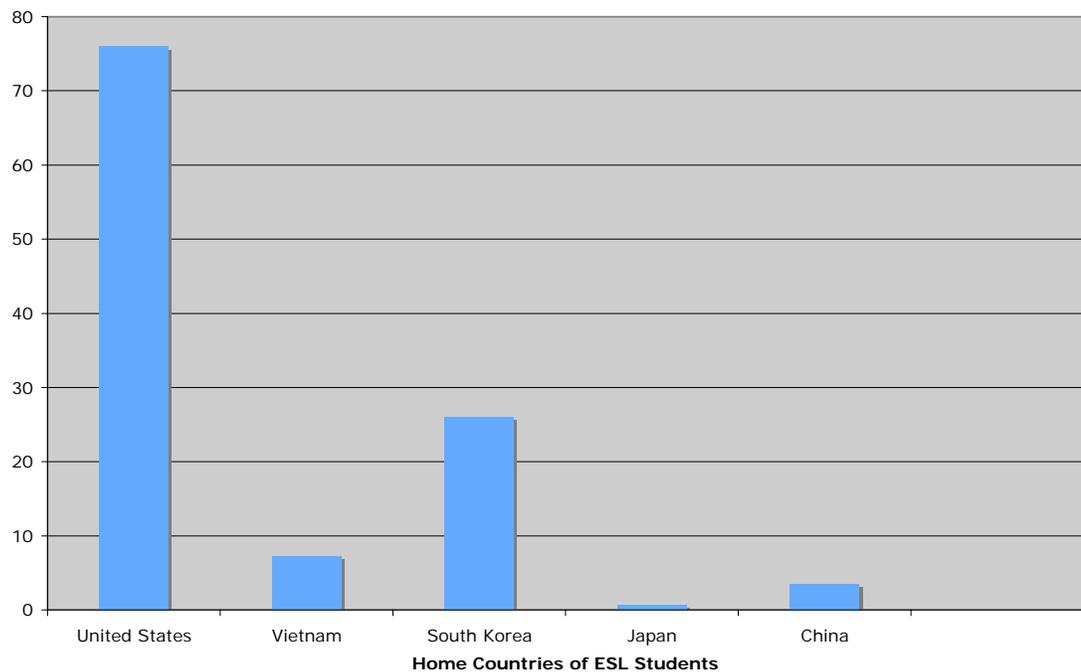
Coulee's English Language Learners

Many ELLs have discussed their struggles with religion class with each other and Coulee faculty. One student told me that while local American Coulee students were analyzing the Bible stories they were already familiar with during class time, she was working on trying to decipher the basic story lines. Obviously, low scores obtained in religion classes lower grade point averages, appear on transcripts, and present problems for many ELLs applying to colleges in the future. Mr. Hara, a Japanese man who works for the Japanese sister school many of our students come from, approached the Coulee administration to question our school's religion requirements. Because many of our Japanese students perform poorly in their religion classes and it brings down their grade point average, Mr. Hara expressed his concern, as a result, that former Japanese students had trouble getting accepted into Japanese universities when they return from our school. Mr. Hara requested that Coulee let our Japanese students take their religion classes pass/fail. These examples of student struggles because of religion content knowledge reinforce my desire to teach my students the most effective strategies that increase sociocultural background knowledge so they can be better students in their classes.

The Dominant Religions of ELLs' Home Countries

In order to understand the gaps in Christian sociocultural background involved with such a diverse student population in a Catholic school, we need to examine Christian populations in home nations of my classes. The figure below compares the percentages of Christians in all of the countries of my students (CIA World Fact Book, n.d.)

Figure 1.1: Christian Populations in Home Countries of Students in ESL



The need for Coulee's ELLs to learn strategies that increase background knowledge is highlighted when you compare the lack of Christian background at the societal level with the local Coulee population's background. When you consider this comparison with

Coulee's philosophy and the views of the faculty and ELL population, the need for ELLs to acquire more sociocultural background seems great. I would like to help the faculty and ELLs learn how to narrow the sociocultural gaps in order for our students to be more successful in all of their classes at Coulee.

Research Questions

One of the most important factors affecting a reader's comprehension is the reader's background knowledge (Carrell, 1984). Research has shown that there are numerous ways to help L2 readers build background knowledge and make active links between what they already know and the new information they are learning, such as through the use of pre-reading strategies (Grabe & Stoller, 2001; Holmes & Roser, 1987; Taglieber, et al., 1988). It is well documented that many pre-reading strategies, such as the use of K-W-L charts and anticipation guides, activate prior knowledge for L1 readers (Tierney & Cunningham, 1984); however, there are gaps in the research that explore their effectiveness with L2 readers. This leads to my research questions. Are K-W-L charts and anticipation guides effective pre-reading strategies for ELLs? Is one of the above-mentioned strategies more effective than the other for building background as well as helping ELLs make active links between old and new knowledge? I address these questions in my capstone.

Overview of Capstone

In the second chapter of this capstone, I document the research that pertains to the building of sociocultural background knowledge and the connecting of prior experiences for reading comprehension. The findings emphasize the lack of research published regarding strategies used to build sociocultural background for ELLs. Chapter three is the methods chapter and it describes my plan to develop and facilitate lesson plans that use K-W-L charts and anticipation guides. It describes the context and participants of the study, the type of research that was carried out, the research methods used which include detailed descriptions of the lesson plans as well as their actualizations in the classroom, the materials, and the data collection techniques that were used. The results of the plan are described and analyzed in the chapter following, chapter four. Finally, the conclusion, chapter five, is where the research is summarized and where the implications and limitations of the research are discussed. It also recommends possibilities for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

“We don’t see things as they are, we see things as we are.” –Anais Nin

Introduction

This quote by Anais Nin played over and over in my head as I read and critiqued the research articles on the important role of background knowledge in reading comprehension. Nin summed up the role of background knowledge in a simple yet eloquent quote regarding perceptions in life. Reading is not a passive activity in which readers are filling up their brains with knowledge and information. On the contrary, it is an interactive activity in which readers are actively connecting the new information they are reading with their prior experiences and knowledge (Carrell, 1984; Swaffar, 1988). The product of this combining of experiences and areas of knowledge, the meaning, is unique to each individual reader (Carrell, 1984; Swaffar, 1988). As Jane Tompkins stated, “Meaning has no existence outside of its realization in the mind of the reader” (as cited in Swaffar, 1988, p. 123). Meaning is not found in the text, rather it is found in the reader (Carrell, 1984). This pertains to the roles of culture and sociocultural background knowledge. Experts suggest that K-W-L charts and anticipation guides are effective for building sociocultural background knowledge for L1 readers (Tierney & Cunningham,

1984). However, I developed questions that haven't been researched. My research questions are as follows; are K-W-L charts and anticipation guides effective pre-reading strategies for ELLs? Is one of the above-mentioned strategies more effective than the other for building background as well as helping ELLs make active links between old and new knowledge? ELLs face different reading comprehension challenges than L1 readers such as differences in culture, which affect sociocultural background knowledge. In this chapter, I explore my research questions by first addressing how the roles of culture and sociocultural background knowledge affect the L2 reading process. Then I discuss how schema theory addresses the role of readers' background knowledge. This leads to a consideration of the various problems affecting reading comprehension for L2 readers. After that, I introduce the research regarding the importance of teaching pre-reading strategies that build background and activate prior knowledge, shedding light in particular on L1 research done with K-W-L charts and anticipation guides. Finally, I address my plan to explore the gap in the research in order to answer my questions.

Culture and Sociocultural Background Knowledge

As Swaffar (1988) stated, "Words in texts function as signs within a culture-bound system. Consequently, any product of a reader's comprehension will depend on a reader's grasp of the constituent systems" (p. 123). In this section, I address how culture is intertwined with various factors of content schema. Content schema consists of general topic background knowledge as well as sociocultural knowledge. A reader's societal, home, peer, and school cultures are all sub-factors within sociocultural

knowledge (Au, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1992; 1995; McGee Banks & Banks, 1995; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, & Collazo, 2004; Readence, Bean, & Baldwin, 2005). All components of content schema interact to produce meaning from a text for a reader.

Different experts have coined different terms for the concepts of general topic and sociocultural background knowledge. Vygotsky (1987) referred to concepts pertaining to the sociocultural knowledge as *everyday concepts* and concepts pertaining to general topic knowledge as *scientific concepts* (as cited in Au, 1998, p. 300). Others have referred to sources of general topic knowledge as *academic funds* and sources of sociocultural background just as *social background* or as *everyday funds* (Moje et al. 2004, p. 38). They have also referred to these concepts in terms of *in* and *out-of-school funds of knowledge and discourses* (p. 41). Regardless of the terms used, however, the important concept to remember is that they all interact together as the reader constructs meaning. How a reader interprets these funds pertains to schematizing, which is a process discussed in the following section.

Schema Theory

Schema theory addresses the role of a reader's background knowledge in the comprehension process (Carrell, 1984). Patricia Carrell (1984) is one of the second language acquisition (SLA) experts who brought *schema theory* and its various components into the SLA world from the work of psychology and L1 reading experts such as Marilyn Adams and Allan Collins, Richard Anderson, David Rumelhart and

Andrew Ortony, and Frederic Bartlett (as cited in Carrell, 1984). Carrell (1984) states that text “does not carry meaning by itself, rather, a text only provides directions for listeners or readers as to how they should retrieve or construct meaning from their own, previously acquired knowledge” (p. 332). This acquired knowledge is the reader’s background knowledge and the previously acquired knowledge is referred to as *schemata* (Carrell, p. 332). Each of these *directions*, or the important ideas or macropropositions that the reader is reading, combines to create a text’s schema. This process of combining together is the process of schematizing (Swaffar, 1988). As schema theory is explained, it becomes easier to understand how reading comprehension can be much more of a complex issue than just an issue pertaining to a language deficit, such as not knowing a particular vocabulary word (Carrell, 1984). Now that schema theory has been defined, the process of whether a reader successfully comprehends new information or not will be described.

In order to understand the processes of L2 comprehension and memory, Readence, Bean, and Baldwin (2005) review the work of L1 researchers in this field in an article addressing the roles of culture and language in the L2 reading and writing process. Readence et al. (2005) agree that all students’ prior knowledge is the vehicle for comprehending new information in a text. They cite L1 constructivists Duffy and Jonassen’s (1992) claim that knowledge is constructed from experience and that the accumulation of all of the experiences unique to each reader’s life is what guides each person’s reading comprehension processes. Cognitive structure, which was formulated by Piaget, is the term used for how these life experiences and concepts are organized in

memory (as cited in Readence, Bean, & Baldwin, 2005). Basically, we remember things in terms of categories that are founded by and grounded in “common cultural and experiential patterns” (Readence, et al.). How these cognitive structures organize new information pertains to issues of memory.

Cognitive psychologists classify memory into two groups. The first kind is “short-term” memory. Kintsch (1998) stated that short-term memory is unable to efficiently store new information unless it is constantly rehearsed. The rehearsal of this information is also referred to as the working memory (as cited in Readence, Bean, & Baldwin, 2005, p. 166). In contrast, long-term memory, also referred to as permanent memory, is the goal of reading comprehension. It is the “storage system for all our prior knowledge” (Readence et al. 2005, p. 166). Information and life experiences filter into our long-term memory and we can recall this information either with ease or difficulty based on how well it was organized when it initially entered our short-term memories. In sum, readers are able to comprehend the information they read when it has been organized into long-term memory.

With the role of schema theory explained in the complex process of L1 comprehension, we can examine how important the different components of background knowledge and memory are, in particular, for ELLs. Swaffar emphasizes how every L2 study published stresses the importance for ELLs to have background knowledge that is well organized in their cognitive structures on the topic they are reading about in order to facilitate reading comprehension (Swaffar, 1988). Experts in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and schema theory have named multiple components of this

background knowledge. Patricia Carrell (1987) divides schema into two types; *content schema* is knowledge pertaining to the content of a text and *formal schema* pertains to the rhetorical organizational structures of a text. Swaffar (1988) refers to these two types as *concept schema* (content) and *lexical schema* (formal). The actual information in the reading and the particular purpose would be the content schema. The formal schema is about the text organization such as how the main ideas and supporting details are laid out and conveyed or how events are sequenced (Carrell, 1987). Word recognition (vocabulary), syntactical, lexical and morphological features would also be categorized under formal schema (Carrell). Although rhetorical structure is a large factor in L2 comprehension (Carrell, 1984; 1987; Chu, Swaffar, & Charney, 2002; Swaffar, 1988), multiple SLA studies have shown that content schema is more important than formal schema for comprehension (Carrell, 1987; Swaffar, 1988).

Patricia Carrell (1987) conducted a study to assess whether content or formal schemata had a stronger influence on comprehension involving two groups of ELLs; both groups had students with Muslim or Catholic backgrounds. All the readers of both groups had to read one text with a Christian topic and one text with a Muslim topic. Within each group, one half of the participants read both of the texts in a familiar, well-organized rhetorical format; the other half read the texts in an unfamiliar, altered rhetorical format. When the final results were compared, Carrell found that the students recalled more of the information from the texts with the familiar content and unfamiliar rhetorical form than from the texts with a familiar rhetorical form and unfamiliar content. For example, the students with a Catholic background recalled more of the unorganized

text with a Catholic topic than they recalled the organized text on the Muslim topic. Carrell determined that content schema affects reading comprehension more than formal schemata. Studies that explore rhetorical structure often involve issues pertaining to culture as well. Carrell's study involving Muslim and Catholic students also showed how sociocultural factors are ingrained with and inseparable from all of the other comprehension factors. This further stresses the need to identify sociocultural background knowledge as a main factor affecting L2 reading comprehension and to identify effective strategies to help build L2 readers' content schema.

Local Versus Global Reading Strategies for ELLs

L2 reading is an interactive process in which a plethora of factors interact to construct meaning (Carrell, 1984; Swaffar, 1988). It is true that local factors, such as unfamiliar vocabulary words and text grade-level readability, affect L2 reading comprehension (Carrell, 1984; Taglieber, Johnson, & Yarbrough, 1988). Additional factors that may affect L2 comprehension include ELLs' interest in a topic, age, proficiency level in the language they're reading, and even gender (Carrell & Wise 1998, Grabe & Stoller, 2001). However, as I stated above, reading comprehension involves many more factors. Many SLA researchers divide effective reading strategies used to aid the comprehension process into two categories. Marva Barnett uses the terms *text-level strategies* and *word-level strategies* (1988, p. 150). Barnett also makes references to Roger Barnard's term *global* (text-level) and to Carol Hosenfeld's term *local* (word-level) (as cited in Barnett, p. 150). Examples of local strategies are using context clues to guess word meanings,

identifying the grammatical categories of words, following reference words, and recognizing meanings through word families and formations. These strategies are considered bottom-up, which is a mode of information processing Patricia Carrell refers to as being data-driven; in contrast, global strategies are top-down and are considered conceptually-driven (1984, p. 333). Global strategies emphasize looking at texts as a whole; they include accessing background knowledge, predicting, using titles and illustrations to aid comprehension, reading with a purpose, skimming, and scanning (Barnett, 1988, p. 150). Ideally, both global and local strategies work simultaneously in the L2 reading process (Carrell, 1984, p. 333). Traditional ways of teaching L2 reading focused primarily on local reading strategies to aid comprehension. Fortunately, in the last two decades, a conclusive amount of research conducted has suggested the critical need for viewing L2 reading from both the global as well as the local perspectives (Barnett, 1988; Carrell, 1984; Roller & Matambo, 1992; Swaffar, 1988). In sum, although it may appear that ELLs mostly need to employ local strategies to aid comprehension, they need to employ global strategies as well. The global factor of the role of ELLs' sociocultural background knowledge is also discussed in Au's (1998) explanations for the literacy achievement gap among students of diverse backgrounds.

ELL Literacy Achievement Gaps

ELLs fit the description of Au's *students of diverse backgrounds*. Au (1998) gave five explanations for the literacy achievement gap among students of diverse backgrounds, which she defined as students in the United States who are predominantly from low-

income families, are not of European descent, or speak a home language or dialect other than standard English (p. 298). Her explanations were as follows: linguistic differences, cultural differences, discrimination, inferior education, and rationales for schooling (p. 297).

Linguistic and cultural differences are the issues most relevant to this paper although some issues of discrimination may apply as well. My students all speak English as a second language and the majority were not raised in cultures defined as Christian. They differ from Au's description in that they are typically from families of high socio-economic status and are all in the United States with student visas. Discrimination may be a factor for my students considering the local population of Coulee is mostly of European descent, middle-class, and come from families that identify themselves as Catholic or Christian.

Linguistic Differences

Linguistic differences, as summarized earlier in this chapter, pertain to various language barriers ELLs face while reading in English (Au, 1998). What was not discussed earlier was how the perceived status of a student's L1 contributes to literacy achievement. For example, when students are not allowed to speak their L1 with their peers in their school environment, the message that is being sent is that their L1 carries a low status. Issues pertaining to the affects of a student's first language literacy skills on their second language acquisition are critical for an understanding of L2 literacy achievement as well. However, these issues are beyond the scope of this paper.

Cultural Differences

Au's second explanation is that cultural differences heavily influence ELLs' English text comprehension on a variety of different levels. To explain the influential role of culture, Au drew heavily on social constructivist theories that focus on how people see the world in terms of their own cultures. Au emphasized that:

Forms of language and literacy within each culture have developed over time to carry the concepts that carry the experience of that cultural group. Thus, the historical condition is joined to the cultural condition, and links among historical, cultural, and individual conditions are formed when children are learning to use language and literacy (p. 301).

The languages and writing systems of each culture are cultural tools. LeVine (1977) supported the same theory that in cultures around the world, parents instill in their children the cultural values and morals that are valued for their particular culture (as cited in Ho, 1994). Culture influences a person's "preferred forms of interaction, language, and thought" and many times these preferred forms conflict with mainstream behaviors crucial for success (Au, 1998, p. 302). Au emphasized that how students of diverse populations interact in their school environment is directly related to how they were socialized to interact in their homes and communities. Schools in the United States reflect the values of the mainstream culture, which are of European descent and middle

class. Au asserted that students struggle in school then when these mainstream values conflict with their home and community values.

An example of Au's (1998) explanation of cultural differences is given in Ho's (1994) article on cognitive socialization in Confucian heritage cultures. He explained how many students in Confucian societies are taught not to question "the sacred quality of the written word" (p. 297). The result of this ideology is that rote memorization is a valued and common learning strategy used by the students from these cultures. Teachers in Confucian societies are expected to be strict and students are taught not to question or challenge them. Ho stated that the teacher's "role is to impart knowledge- to instruct, not to stimulate, students. The typical teaching methods are formal, expository, and teacher initiated" (p. 298). These Confucian notions conflict directly with the strong emphasis on critical thinking and reading strategies in the American education system (Stapleton, 2001)

Paul Stapleton (2001) conducted a study that further supports the role of cultural differences in the literacy gap between ELL and native English speaking students. His study analyzed critical thinking skills among Japanese students to test the claim made Atkinson (1997) that Japanese lacked critical thinking skills because they are socialized to "show empathy and conformity" which are strong Japanese societal values (as cited in Stapleton, 2001). Stapleton compared Japanese students' critical thinking skills applied to multiple topics; half of the topics were considered important in Japanese society and the other half reflected common American cultural values. For example, he tested students' critical thinking abilities regarding the controversial American topic of gun

control versus the Japanese concern with rice importation. Gun control is not controversial in Japanese society because private gun ownership has always been illegal in Japan and Japan has a much lower percentage of gun-related crimes than the United States. Rice importation, on the other hand, is an important issue and is rooted deeply in Japan's history and culture. Stapleton found that although the Japanese students demonstrated critical thinking skills on both topics, their arguments against rice importation were more developed than their arguments regarding gun control. This study suggests that sociocultural background knowledge played a stronger role than culturally preferred modes of interaction.

ELL Literacy Achievement Gaps and Coulee High

In this section, I'll address how Au's (1998) explanations of linguistic and cultural differences and discrimination as issues that affect literacy achievement are relevant issues for Coulee's ELL population. The role of Au's first explanation, linguistic differences, is the most obvious one in defining comprehension gaps in English content areas, notably in the social studies, religion, and English classes. Many teachers attribute comprehension gaps to these *local* (i.e., *word-level*) factors such as struggles with vocabulary concepts (e.g., definitions of whole words and word parts) and syntax. In fact, before I began teaching at Coulee, they offered *vocabulary* as an ESL class. Au's (1998) second explanation of cultural differences is the most relevant to Coulee's ELL population. The examples of this are extensive. One example of this pertains to Ho's (1994) discussion of the interpretation of the "sacred quality of the written word" and the

role of the teacher as the authority and main source of knowledge in certain cultures (p. 297). Ho states that students are expected to be *passive recipients* of knowledge and must avoid making mistakes, which are punished by ridicule. The students' silence, then, becomes the social norm. Many of the ELLs at Coulee hadn't felt as though they had been allowed to express their opinions in their home country classes, telling me stories of being punished for asking their teachers questions about the content. In American classrooms, teachers expect students to actively seek clarifications. Clarifying is an important learning strategy as well (ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students, 1997). According to the religion teachers, the ELLs' reluctance to participate in discussion or seek clarification is harmful for their comprehension. The *sacred word* ideology also affects preferred modes of teaching and learning (Ho, 1994). Asian educational systems stress memorization and repeated practice. Many of my students feel that the most efficient way for them to learn English is to complete grammar exercises in grammar workbooks. They also have had a hard time finding the value of our class independent reading requirements where they are required to complete various assignments based on reading books of their choice. They are accustomed to the teacher being the only source that tells them exactly what they need to do and know.

Au's (1998) last explanation for the literacy achievement gap I'll discuss in relation to the ELL population at Coulee is discrimination. There are many theories (McGee Banks & Banks, 1995; Ogbu, 1994) indicating that institutions largely don't value and respect ways of thinking and behaving that differ from the US mainstream standard, which is based on values that derive from a middle-class, Christian society of European

descent. With these factors in mind, perhaps many of Coulee's ELLs feel they are discriminated against on the basis of personal spiritual beliefs if they do not identify as Christian. This then may affect their attitudes towards religion class, but more importantly, their perceptions of how they belong to the Coulee community. There are many factors that contribute to literacy gaps between ELL and native English speakers such as discrimination, and linguistic and cultural differences. The factor of cultural differences, which pertains to a reader's sociocultural background knowledge of the information s/he reads, is the most important factor to consider for the purposes of this paper. This leads to a discussion of the pedagogical implications of enhancing ELLs' reading comprehension.

Pedagogical Implications

Meaningful and authentic experiences in school are crucial for ELL success (Au, 1998; Grabe & Stoller, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1992; 1995; McGee Banks & Banks, 1995; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, & Collazo, 2004). Students need to feel a sense of ownership in their schooling experiences and they need to have experiences they feel are relevant and important in their lives, homes and communities. In one study, Moje et al. (2004) assessed the meaningful and authentic experiences of Latino students in Detroit, Michigan in their science classrooms. The researchers broke background knowledge into two different classifications and referred to them as *home* and *school funds*. They claim that schools need to integrate both home and school funds into the content curriculum. Students then connect these funds to create a *third space* of

knowledge that is fundamental for learning. The researchers found that despite the teachers' perceptions that the teachers had been integrating these funds and providing meaningful and authentic experiences for their students, that in actuality, this wasn't happening. For example, even though many of the students' parents worked in the landscaping, farming, and dry cleaning industries, the teachers didn't create activities to help the students activate their prior knowledge of these areas of their home funds to their science units on air and water. The researchers suggested that, like the participants of their study, most urban students in the United States rarely have opportunities to connect their home lives with their school lives. However, as Ladson-Billings (1992; 1995) emphasized, the pedagogy (which McGee Banks and Banks refer to as *equity pedagogy*) must "assume that the cultures of the students are valid, that effective teaching must reflect the lives and interests of students" (as cited in McGee Banks and Banks, 1995, p. 155). In essence, the researchers urge teachers to tap into students' prior experiences and sociocultural background knowledge and use it as a channel to build more sociocultural background knowledge. This leads to Ladson-Billings' discussion of the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy and teaching.

Ladson-Billings (1995) has defined culturally relevant teaching as having three criteria: "Students must experience academic success, students must maintain cultural competence, and students must develop a critical consciousness through which they must challenge the status quo of the current social order" (p. 160). Keeping these criteria in mind, I would like to shed light on Bartolome's suggestion that more important than the *right strategy* is the need for a "humanizing pedagogy that respects and uses the reality,

history, and perspectives of students as an integral part of educational practice” (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 173). In her studies, Ladson-Billings (1995) found that teachers of successful African American students didn’t share many similarities in their teaching strategies, yet they did share the qualities of respecting their students and being knowledgeable in their cultures. The students’ cultures were integrated into various aspects of their classrooms, the teachers identified strongly with their students’ cultures, and the teachers were passionate about teaching (p. 163). Many African American students might fit Au’s (1998) description of students of diverse backgrounds. First of all, African American vernacular English (AAVE) might be considered non-standard English. Hence, many African Americans who speak AAVE may be considered ELLs of standard English. Additionally, many African American students are from low-income families, have cultural differences with standard American culture, and face issues of discrimination and inferior education. Therefore, if a *humanizing* pedagogy is effective for African American students, perhaps it is effective for traditional ELLs as well. Humanizing pedagogy then would call for considering effective strategies that build on ELLs’ sociocultural background knowledge as well as activate their prior knowledge of their past experiences. SLA experts suggest various strategies that help achieve this goal of bringing ELLs’ lives into their schooling experiences.

Pre-reading Strategies

If a pre-reading strategy builds ELLs’ sociocultural background knowledge as well as activates their prior knowledge of past experiences effectively, it could be considered a

humanizing pedagogy in that it makes the information meaningful and relevant to the lives of readers. This leads to a discussion on the details of the *pre-reading* framework for ESL teachers cited by Stoller (Grabe & Stoller, 2001, p. 191). Pre-reading instruction, as its name implies, happens before ELLs read a particular text or begin a particular unit or lesson. L2 experts have suggested, although they don't have the studies to suggest it, that using pre-reading activities makes texts easier for students to comprehend (Grabe & Stoller, 2001; Holmes & Roser, 1987; Taglieber, Johnson, & Yarbrough, 1988). The goals of pre-reading instruction for ELLs can be categorized into five areas (Grabe & Stoller, 2001). First, it should serve to activate prior knowledge and give students and teachers an opportunity to assess whether this prior information is accurate or not. Once teachers know what the L1 or L2 students know and don't know about the topic, they can develop an effective lesson for the upcoming reading (Holmes & Roser, 1987, p. 646). It should also build background by providing specific information about the topic to be read. Because previous research has suggested that topic interest plays a role in comprehension, pre-reading instruction should aim to serve this purpose as well. It also helps ELLs know what to expect from the reading as well as model strategies that students can use independently later (Grabe & Stoller, 2001). Taglieber et al. (1988) further explained the effects of pre-reading instruction for ELLs by adding Hansen's suggestions that, "Not only do pre-reading activities prepare native speakers for the concepts that follow, but by making the reading task easier and connecting the new content more meaningfully to prior knowledge, pre-reading activities make reading a more enjoyable task (as cited in Taglieber et al., 1988, p. 456). There are

a variety of different areas of pre-reading instruction which may include previewing the text (assessing its layout, pictures, titles, subheadings, etc.) to get a gist of or predict the possible topics and generalizations, skimming the text, answering or formulating questions about information in the text, discussing/debating topics in the text, identifying and exploring key vocabulary, connecting common themes in the texts to previous texts read (Grabe & Stoller, 2001, p. 191). Grabe and Stoller also noted that it's important to consider that some types of pre-reading strategies are more effective than others for ELLs. This will be explained next.

Multiple studies have assessed how different pre-reading strategies affect L1 reading comprehension. Fewer have assessed whether or not these same strategies are effective for L2 readers. Some researchers have implied that what has been suggested as effective for L1 are just as effective for L2, without research to support the implication. An example of this comes from Carrell's (1984) suggestion to teach analogies as a pre-reading activity to ELLs based on findings that analogies aid L1 comprehension. However, Hammadou (2000) found results contradictory to Carrell's suggestion in a study she conducted which suggested that the use of analogies impeded ELLs' comprehension. She suggested that the extra language involved in the analogies was an additional burden for the ELLs in comprehension (p. 41). This brings up a question that has not been researched: Are K-W-L charts and anticipation guides beneficial in aiding comprehension for ELLs like research has suggested they are for L1 speakers? Is one of the above-mentioned strategies more effective than the other?

Pre-reading strategies: K-W-L charts and anticipation guides

Although authorities on second language reading in the content areas have cited the use of anticipation guides and K-W-L charts as aiding comprehension, their references are based on studies that only involved native speakers. Much more research needs to be conducted to assess whether pre-reading strategies suggested to aid comprehension in L1 do the same in L2 (Carrell, 1984). For example, Chamot and O'Malley (1994) cite Donna Ogle's study based on L1 readers in their handbook on implementing CALLA in sheltered secondary classrooms. Likewise, Peregoy and Boyle (2001) recommend the use of anticipation guides in their ESL resource book for K-12 teachers and the studies they cite were also studies that pertained specifically to L1 learners. It's also important to consider age and proficiency levels as factors influencing the effectiveness of particular reading strategies. With these issues in mind, I'll address the research that has been done on the use of the K-W-L chart and anticipation guide.

Donna Ogle (1986) created the K-W-L chart in response to the need for L1 readers to activate prior knowledge in a graphical way. Each student receives a copy of the K-W-L worksheet and it is presented to the whole class on an overhead projector or other means. It contains three cognitive steps; the first two are included in the pre-reading portion of the reading lesson. Step one is the *K* and it signifies *what I know*. Step two is the *W* and signifies *what I want to learn*. The third step, *L*, is to be completed post-reading or during-reading and it signifies *what I learned*. *K* activates prior knowledge in two ways. Ogle refers to the first way as *brainstorming*. The teacher chooses a key concept from the reading and elicits what the students know or are uncertain about and misconceptions

they have about the topic and then writes it down under the *K* column. Although strong L1 readers demonstrate the cognitive process of brainstorming automatically when they read, struggling L1 readers need explicit instruction on how to brainstorm (Beers, 2003; Tierney & Cunningham, 1984). The goal of the brainstorm is to identify where the gaps in the readers' schemata lie in order to fill them to prepare for the reading (Ogle, 1986). In other words, the goal is to activate and repair prior knowledge. As assumptions and misconceptions arise, the teacher and classmates have a chance to question the sources of the information and attempt to clarify the misconceptions. As the class discusses these issues, background is being built for the reading as well.

The second way that prior knowledge is activated during the *K* step is when the teacher guides the students to take the items from the brainstorm list and put them into broader categories (Ogle, 1986). Ogle uses the key concept of *black widows* for her example. If the students generated topics such as *dangerous, spiders, special marks, black, poisonous, dessert*, the students would be encouraged to place these terms under the categories *description* and *location*. Teachers assess the ease in which the students were able to complete the *K* portion of the K-W-L to determine whether or not more background building needs to be done before the reading. (Ogle, 1986).

Next, the students and teacher brainstorm questions about the topic that they anticipate will be in the reading and write them under the *W* column of the chart (Ogle, 1986). This portion of the strategy helps students develop their purposes for reading; they have different questions and will read to find the answers to their questions. Ogle stresses that the teacher's important role in this process is to point out the students'

disagreements and the categories lacking information to help the students generate more questions. She says this, in turn, helps their motivation to read for the information questioned. Once a sufficient number of questions have been developed as a group, each student is encouraged to finish the *W* on their own by generating some final questions before reading which serves to help the students personally relate to their topics.

The final step of the K-W-L is to record what was learned under the *L* column making sure to focus specifically on the questions and categories that were developed (Ogle, 1986). Ogle points out that when students' questions aren't answered in the text, it empowers them to be seekers of their own sources of knowledge.

A second pre-reading strategy that I address in this paper is anticipation guides (see appendix N). There is no disagreement among the authorities that when readers are motivated to read (Grabe & Stoller, 2001) and can identify a purpose for reading (Tierney & Cunningham, 1984), they comprehend better. What better way to do this with adolescents than to create controversy? Just as a K-W-L chart, anticipation guides help introduce the key topics of a reading which serves to help focus L1 students' attention (Head & Readence, 1992). According to Head and Readence, to create an effective anticipation guide, the teacher first provides a list of three to five controversial statements about the main topic of the reading. These statements should all be main points in the reading and should be designed with the goal of challenging the student's beliefs about a topic and motivate them to read more about it. Next the students need to write down whether they agree or disagree with each statement under a column marked *before reading*. Then the class has a discussion based on the students' individual responses to

the topics. The teacher's role is to guide the students to keep the discussion on-task. Through this process, the teacher can assess readers' previous thoughts, opinions, and possible misconceptions about a topic and use the assessments to modify the upcoming reading lesson. The students' prior knowledge is activated plus they are anticipating the information that they are about to read. They are also developing their critical thinking skills and are motivated to read. After the initial discussion, the students read. The text then serves as the medium through which the students defend, support, or change their opinions (Lunstrum, 1981). After the reading, the students refer back to their anticipation guide, and under the *after-reading* column, go through the same statements and assess whether they still agree or disagree with each one. A final class discussion could serve as a culminating activity (Head & Readence, 1992).

Now that both K-W-L Charts and anticipation guides have been explained, it is essential to weigh the pros and cons of each strategy against one another. One issue to consider is transfer: the student's ability to apply the strategies he or she has learned to other texts independently (Carr & Ogle, 1987). Opinions among the L1 reading experts vary on whether or not the long-term goal of any efficient strategy should be for students to be able to eventually use it independently and whether or not a strategy that doesn't support transfer is worth the effort (Tierney & Cunningham, 1984). Readence, Moore, and Rickelman (2000) have critiqued anticipation guides, arguing they don't support transfer because they are teacher-directed activities. These reading authorities have suggested that after the students become familiar with the strategy, the teacher could have a group of students who have more prior knowledge on the topic of focus create an

anticipation guide for the rest of the class. These students would be responsible for coming to a consensus about the three to five most important points of the reading (Readence, Moore, & Rickelman, 2000). On the other hand, some L1 experts have explicitly stated that educators shouldn't be concerned if some strategies/activities don't support transfer (Dole, Valencia, Greer, & Wardrop, 1991). In one study of two types of pre-reading strategies, one a *teacher-directed* approach and the other an *interactive* approach, the teacher-directed approach proved to be more effective at aiding comprehension (Dole et al, 1991). These researchers commented that although it is important for students to be taught how to use multiple strategies, many that they will eventually be able to use independently, it is sometimes advantageous for the teacher to lead from up front. This way, teachers can focus on and explicitly teach the most important information the students need to know which helps aid comprehension.

If one of the goals of the pre-reading strategy were to foster independence, perhaps using a K-W-L chart would be more beneficial. K-W-L charts are easy for students to use independently because of the simple chart format (Ogle, 1986). Students who know it helps them read better can either think out the *K* and *W* sections in their head or they could easily write out the graph on a piece of paper. If an educator wanted to further promote transfer, she or he may teach the *K-W-L Plus* strategy (Carr & Ogle, 1987). To use this, teachers conduct the basic K-W-L lesson and then guide the students to map and summarize the information of the text after reading. Because writing and restructuring information aid the comprehension process and help promote critical thinking skills, students are able to transfer the strategies to other texts more easily.

If one of the objectives of the lesson were for students to form opinions and think critically about a topic, perhaps the anticipation guide would be the right strategy to teach; the basic K-W-L strategy doesn't foster these skills. At the same time, it's important to address the concern that many students either don't like class discussions or to share their opinions with their teacher and classmates. Further more, encouraging students from cultures where creating controversies isn't acceptable, such as Ho (1994) suggested in his article on Confucian heritage cultures, would be an extra challenge for everyone involved with the lesson. Another advantage for the K-W-L is that it's easier for a teacher or students to use: it's easy to reproduce because of its simple graph format (Ogle, 1986). They are not as time consuming to develop as anticipation guides either. Advocates of anticipation guides have claimed that they are easy to develop as well; however, teachers commonly make them ineffective by listing too many main points or by not creating enough controversy in the statements (Head & Readence, 1992). Perhaps teachers of teenagers and adults could run into the problem of creating too much controversy and end up with chaos. Head and Readence asked L1 readers to compare the following two statements in an anticipation guide about nutrition: "Eating fruits and vegetables is good for you" versus "If you want to live a long time, be a vegetarian" (p. 233). The later is clearly more controversial and will spark a more interesting discussion. Keeping the discussion portion in mind, it's also important to consider the relevant research. Several experts (Dole et al., 1991) have cautioned that if discussions get off-topic, or if the prior knowledge getting tapped is inaccurate, it could hurt the students'

comprehension of the reading. This could be because the students' focus was misguided to irrelevant information.

Another important critique of both strategies is that neither one builds very much background according to Readence, et al. (2000). Teachers should make sure to build background for topics (Zhaohua, 2004) in other ways such as providing preview guides (Chen & Graves, 1995) pictures or photographs, slides, showing movie clips, having guest speakers, taking field trips or having other real-life experiences, plays, skits, etc. (Carrell, 1984). On the other hand, there is great versatility in both strategies. Either one is adaptable for various levels of ESL proficiency and for various ages when used orally (Ogle, 1986; Head & Readence, 1992). On a final note, researchers have commented that students really enjoy both strategies (Ogle, 1986; Head & Readence, 1992). Ogle stated that K-W-L charts were commonly her students' preferred strategies and that the texts they remembered the most were those done when a K-W-L lesson was incorporated. All of the above research was done with L1 readers; it would be interesting to explore if they would have the same results with L2 readers.

Conclusion

In examining ELLs reading comprehension abilities, it is essential to understand the roles of culture and sociocultural background on comprehension as well as how they relate to a reader's schema. It has been discovered that readers don't just employ local strategies in order to comprehend what they read; they employ global ones as well. Therefore, as teachers, we need explore how to aid the use of these global strategies.

Examining the explanations for literacy gaps between L1 and L2 speakers is crucial. From these understandings, we can create classroom environments where authentic and meaningful lessons that engage students, build background, and activate prior knowledge play active roles in the learning experiences. I suggest K-W-L charts and anticipation guides as two pre-reading strategies that can help create this environment.

This leads to my research question. It is well documented that the use of K-W-L charts and anticipation guides activate prior knowledge for L1 readers (Tierney & Cunningham, 1984). However, ELLs typically face different problems with reading comprehension than L1 readers. Therefore, are both of these pre-reading strategies effective for ELLs? Is one of the above-mentioned strategies more effective than the other for building background as well as helping ELLs make active links between old and new knowledge? Exploring these questions will help me bring my students' whole selves into the classroom.

The following methods chapter describes the plan to develop and facilitate lesson plans that use K-W-L charts and anticipation guides. It describes the context and participants of the study, the type of research that was carried out, the research methods used which include detailed descriptions of the lesson plans as well as their actualizations in the classroom, the materials, and the data collection techniques that were used. The results of the plan are described and analyzed in the chapter following. Finally, the conclusion is where the research is summarized, where the implications and limitations of the research are discussed. Finally, it recommends possibilities for future research.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

It is well documented that many pre-reading strategies, such as the use of K-W-L charts and anticipation guides, activate prior knowledge for L1 readers (Tierney & Cunningham, 1984). Many second language experts advocate for the use of these pre-reading strategies for ELLs as well; however, there are gaps in the research suggesting their effectiveness with ELLs. This issue is an important one to consider because of the different reading comprehension challenges ELL face compared to L1 readers. This leads to my research questions:

1. Are K-W-L Charts and anticipation guides effective pre-reading strategies for aiding ELLs' reading comprehension abilities?
2. Is one strategy more effective than the other for building sociocultural background as well as helping students make active links between prior and new knowledge?

This chapter explains a research plan that was used to explore the possible answers to these questions. First, the context and participants in the research are explained. Next, the details of the particular research method chosen are discussed along with the rationale for using it. Then the details of the lesson plans as well as their facilitations are discussed

which includes the critical reflections and assessments. Finally, the process of analyzing the data collected to explore the effectiveness of the two different strategies is described.

Context and Participants

The school where my research took place, which I refer to as Coulee, is located in a Mid-western town with a population of approximately thirty thousand residents. It is a day school for the students who attend from the local population and a boarding school for the international population of students. It is a Catholic school with a strong emphasis on integrating Christian doctrine and values in every realm of the school's community and learning environment. A time for prayer is required before every class period and every school function, and Christian perspectives are incorporated into all of the subject areas and extra curricular activities. All students are required to take religion classes each semester as well.

Seven students participated in the research study. They all arrived at Coulee for their first English immersion experience in August of 2006. All the participants had uninterrupted formal schooling up to their respective grade levels in their home countries prior to coming to Coulee. Although their transcripts indicated that their performances in school in their home countries varied from average to excellent, it is difficult to assess from a transcript grade how well the students read and write in their first language. All of them took English as a foreign language (EFL) classes prior to attending Coulee. According to student entrance questionnaires and interviews (see appendix B), on an

average, all of the students had received EFL instruction in their home countries for four fifty-minute periods a week since the early elementary grades.

At Coulee, they all lived in dormitories on the school campus. Most of the students were enrolled either in the ninth or tenth grade and all of them were in my ESL 2 class, which is for students at the intermediate level of English proficiency. They took ESL for two consecutive class periods a day, which totaled ninety minutes a day. Of the seven students, six plan on graduating from Coulee High School and attending college in the United States. One student was on a yearlong exchange program and intends on graduating from her high school in her home country.

All of the students in the study are from Asian countries, which include Japan, China, Vietnam, and South Korea. None of them have received education on the Christian religion prior to attending Coulee. The research began on the first day of the second semester in the 2006-2007 school year. At this point in the school year, all of the participants had completed one semester of a religion class called Introduction to Christianity where they studied the Old Testament. One student in the ESL 2 class was from Mexico but he was not included in the study because he has a very strong background in Catholic education; he was raised in a practicing Catholic family, attended Catholic schools his whole life, and is from a country where over ninety-five percent of people identify themselves as Christian; eighty-nine percent of this number is Catholic (The World Fact Book, n.d.).

I chose to use the quasi-research approach as my research method. This is a method of research that was adapted from the experimental research approach. Experimental research uses experiments to make suggestions about research questions. Anderson (1969) defined an experiment as “a situation in which one observes the relationship between two variables by deliberately producing a change in one and looking to see whether this alteration produces a change in the other” (as cited in Brown & Rodgers, 2004, p. 211). A typical true experimental study is one that uses two randomly selected groups who receive two different experimental treatments. All of the participants typically take a pre-test, receive the experimental treatment, and then take a post-test (Brown & Rodgers, 2004). When there are variations to the true experimental design, such as the use of one already intact group that receives sequential treatments, it’s referred to as quasi-experimental research (Brown & Rodgers, 2004).

There are many reasons why I choose quasi-experimental research for my research method. First of all, it is the best match for my everyday teaching environment. I teach academic and social English to three different levels of ESL classes. Through thematic units, I facilitate activities that help my students improve their skills in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Explicit instruction of reading and writing strategies as well as explicit instruction of language features is also included. My units reflect the system of *narrow reading*; each unit typically contains seven different varied reading materials pertaining to the unit theme. I make sure to carefully scaffold every unit and reading within the unit.

My students have enjoyed the various scaffolding activities including heavy emphasis on pre-reading strategies and activities, and I felt as though what I was doing was aligned with what I had learned about effective ESL instruction. However, I had always reflected on the amount of time it takes to properly scaffold a reading and a unit. For example, last year we spent two and a half months on our “Rethinking Columbus” unit when I had anticipated spending a month and a half. I often felt as though we should have been moving faster through the units and that my students should have been covering more content. Also, although my students would perform very well on the essay-based tests I gave on the unit readings, I still wondered how much of their scores were the results of rote memorization drills from the previous night’s cram session, and if they were truly retaining and comprehending the completely foreign content matter. To sum it up, I was asking myself, “Am I servicing my students properly? Am I providing them with the opportunities to obtain the information that I know is crucial for their success at Coulee high school and eventually in US colleges and universities?” These questions led me to explore the various methods I could use to help answer my research questions. This led me to find quasi-experimental research.

Quasi-experimental research is a method that would allow me to use quantitative data to compare the effectiveness of two different pre-reading strategies with students with little Christian education. Through this research method, I could use one group of students who received four treatments and compare the assessment scores of each of the four treatments. I also used survey data as supportive data in my research; my students participated in surveys before and after the treatments. Through these means, I was also

able to assess my students' previous religious education and attitudes about the reading lessons in an authentic, meaningful way. Now that the choice of a research method has been justified, the actual plan of action is discussed.

Research Methods

Plan of Action

The week prior to the first day of school, all new ELLs go through a comprehensive assessment process to determine their ESL program placement that includes an entrance questionnaire and interview to obtain information about previous English experiences (see appendix B).

For the timeline of my plan of action, refer to table 3.1. I first had my participants complete surveys (see appendix C) to assess the following factors unique to each student: prior familiarity/education with Christianity and perceived knowledge of Christianity. The next day, I gave the students a one-page passage with a Flesch-Kincaid grade level of 6.0 to read about a New Testament story that is generally well-known to Christians, identified as *passage 0* (see appendix D), and told them they would take a quiz on it. Then I collected passage 0 and gave them an assessment of it (see appendix E). The entire process of treatment 0 lasted approximately forty minutes; students were given fifteen minutes to read the passage and they took between fifteen and twenty-five minutes to finish the quiz.

On day three, I planned and facilitated a K-W-L lesson around *passage A* (see appendix F), a different passage about a New Testament story that is generally well-

known to Christians, with a Flesch-Kincaid grade level of 5.7. I followed Beer's (2003) recommendation for the creation of the K-W-L lesson, which was based on Ogle's (1986) original model, and Ogle's method. I also modified various elements to include strategies that I perceived to have been successful with former classes (see appendices G and H for lesson plan details). After completing the K-W-L lesson and reading of passage A, I collected the readings and K-W-L charts and the students took a quiz on passage A (see appendix I). The entire process of treatment A took about seventy minutes. The K-W-L lesson lasted about thirty minutes, and like treatment 0, students were given fifteen minutes to read the passage and took between fifteen and twenty-five minutes to complete the quiz.

On day four, I facilitated an anticipation guide lesson for *passage B*, the third New Testament story that is generally well-known to Christians with a Flesch-Kincaid grade level of 5.8 (see appendix J). I developed the lesson in accordance to the steps Head and Readence (1992) recommended (see appendices K and L). The students completed the assessment on passage B (see appendix M) after the lesson without the use of the anticipation guide worksheets or reading passages. The entire process of treatment B lasted for approximately the same amount of time as treatment A: seventy minutes. Once again, the anticipation guide lesson lasted about thirty minutes. Then students were given fifteen minutes to read the passage and took between fifteen and twenty-five minutes to complete the quiz.

The students read the fourth New Testament story that is generally well-known to Christians, passage C, on the fifth day (see appendix N). This was a no-treatment

passage like the first passage. After I collected the passage C readings, they were given a quiz on it (see appendix O). Treatment C took approximately forty minutes, like the first no-treatment. Finally, they were given a survey that assessed why they perceived they performed the best on certain quizzes. It also asked them which reading lessons they thought aided their comprehension most efficiently (see appendix P).

Table 3.1: Timeline for Action Plan

Date	Task	Anticipated Time	Purpose
Monday, January 22	Participants took surveys.	25 min.	To assess religious education backgrounds.
Tuesday, January 23	1. Students read passage 0. 2. Students completed an assessment of passage 0.	1. 15 min. 2. 15-25 min.	1. To implement the no-treatment situation: what the students can do without scaffolding 2. To obtain an immediate assessment of the no-treatment passage.
Wednesday, January 24	1. The K-W steps of the K-W-L lesson was conducted. 2. The students read passage A. 3. The L step of the K-W-L was completed. 4. The students completed an assessment of passage A.	1. 20 min. 2. 15 min. 3. 10 min. 4. 15-25 min.	To implement and assess the first treatment: treatment A.

Thursday, January 25	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The first six steps of the anticipation guide lesson was conducted. 2. The students read passage B. 3. The final steps of the lesson were completed. 4. The students completed an assessment of passage A. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 20 min. 2. 15 min. 3. 10 min. 4. 15-25 min. 	To implement and assess the second treatment: treatment B
Friday, January 26	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students read passage C 2. Students took an assessment of passage C 3. Students took a reading lesson perceptions survey 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 15 min. 2. 15-25 min. 3. 25 min. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To implement a second no-treatment passage. 2. To assess it. 3. To assess perceptions of reading lessons.

Data/Materials

To explore my research question regarding the effectiveness of reading strategies, I used four carefully selected and altered readings. To find the readings, I typed the search words *children's Bible stories* on the Google internet search engine and found the web site gardenofpraise.com, which has over seventy-five lesson plans on different Bible stories (Children's Bible lessons, n.d.). I choose four stories from the New Testament that I perceived as being generally well-known by Christians. Then I cut and pasted the stories onto a Microsoft Word document and used the program for estimating the Flesch-Kincaid reading grade levels for each reading passage. I wanted them all to be about three hundred words long and around a sixth grade reading level; therefore, I altered each story, making it either more or less challenging until the program stated each met these

requirements. I altered each story in various ways, such as by changing vocabulary words. For example, I replaced obscure Bible terms and other words with synonyms. I also changed verb tenses, altered sentence lengths, and made passive sentences active. To assess the comprehension of the passages immediately following the readings, I used quizzes that I developed that I could score with a point system. These had roughly the same Flesch-Kincaid reading grade level as well.

Data Analysis

Different data was used in different ways to explore the research questions in terms of the two larger areas of the students' comprehension of the reading passages after each reading treatment and the students' perceptions of which strategies they liked the best. I used the data that explored the Coulee learning environment as informal data to paint the picture of my students' learning environment. The most important data for my research questions is the data obtained from the post-reading passage student assessments because it is the data that showed the effectiveness of each reading lesson the strongest. All of the questions were written to be textually explicit; the answers could be explicitly found in a single sentence in the reading passage. A correct answer was one that was either answered explicitly or paraphrased. A wrong answer was an unanswered question (i.e., a blank answer), an incorrect answer, or an answer that did not provide detailed enough information.

A graph comparing and contrasting the total group's mean scores of each post-passage reading assessment test was used, as well as a graph comparing how each student's individual score for each test differed. A paired Student's t-test was used to compare

each quiz's mean score in order to see if the differences were significant or not. The next chapter discusses the results, which explain what I found about aiding reading comprehension of reading passages with Christian topics.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In this chapter, the results are presented, interpreted, and discussed. The results of the study are described through two perspectives: quiz score results based on quizzes the students took immediately after reading each reading and a survey of the students' perceptions of how the pre-reading lessons affected their comprehension of each reading and performance on each quiz. The results of the quizzes generally showed that students obtained the highest scores when the K-W-L pre-reading strategy lesson was used with the respective reading. Refer to the table 4.1 for the reference names and schedule for the reading treatments and quizzes.

Presentation of Results

Table 4.1: Reference Names and Schedule for Reading Treatments and Quizzes

Figure Label	Pre-reading lesson treatment	Order in which lesson was completed
Quiz 0	First no treatment	First day
Quiz A	K-W-L Chart	Second day
Quiz B	Anticipation Guide Lesson	Third day
Quiz C	Final no treatment	Fourth day

Before presenting the results, I discuss how the quizzes were scored. All of the questions were written to be textually explicit which means the answers were stated explicitly, in one sentence, in the reading. A correct answer was one that was either answered explicitly or paraphrased. For example, the assessment of passage C asks, “What is leprosy?” One explicit correct answer from Bud was, “A skin disease, contagious.” A poorly written, paraphrased correct answer, from Chris, was, “Sick of skin.” Illian paraphrased his correct answer as well, “Leprosy is a disease that make body unclean, affect bad to the skin.” These examples also illustrate that grammatical errors did not affect students’ scores; I scored correct content information only. No point was given for unanswered questions (i.e., a blank answer). If the student provided incorrect information or didn’t provide enough information, the answer was scored as wrong and didn’t receive a point. For example, to answer a question from assessment A about why John the Baptist was a special child, Tom wrote, “Because he was baptized” which was an incorrect answer. Stan’s correct answer was, “He has a special mission that tell people they have to go to Jordan and baptized.” Chris’s incorrect answer to assessment C’s question, “What did Jesus do to the Lepers?” was “He prayed for them.” Wendy responded correctly by writing, “He healed the patients.” Approximately fifty-six percent of the total answers that did not receive a point were answers with incorrect information; the remaining forty-three percent were answers the students had left blank. With the scoring procedure in mind, I explain the results next.

On an average, the students in the study performed the best on quiz A, the quiz that accompanied the reading with the K-W-L Chart lesson, with a mean score of 9.1 out of

11 points. Interestingly, the second highest average score came from the first no treatment lesson; the mean score was 8.1. With a mean score of 8, the assessment of the anticipation guide lesson ranked third. The students averaged the worst on the final no treatment passage with a mean score of 7.1. Refer to figure 4.1 for the quiz score averages and refer to table 4.2 for the standard deviations and means of the quiz scores.

Figure 4.1: Averages of Quiz Scores

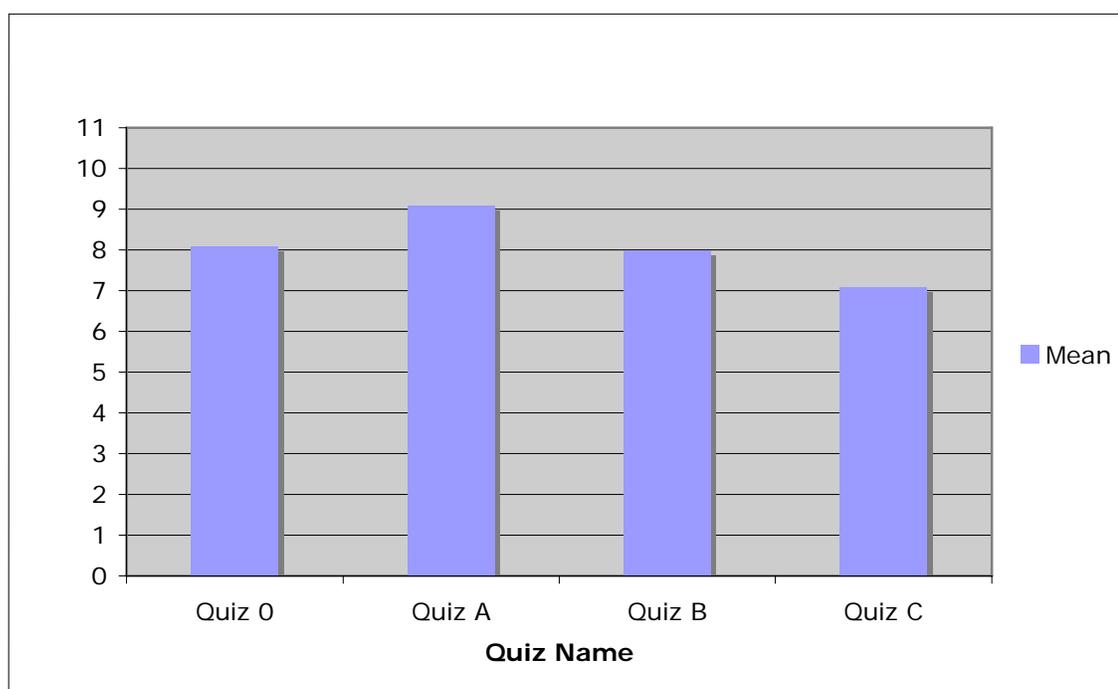


Table 4.2: The Standard Deviations and Means of the Quiz Scores

Quiz Name	Standard Deviation	Mean Scores
Quiz 0	3.078342	9.1
Quiz A	2.768875	8.1
Quiz B	2	8
Quiz C	3.532165	7.1

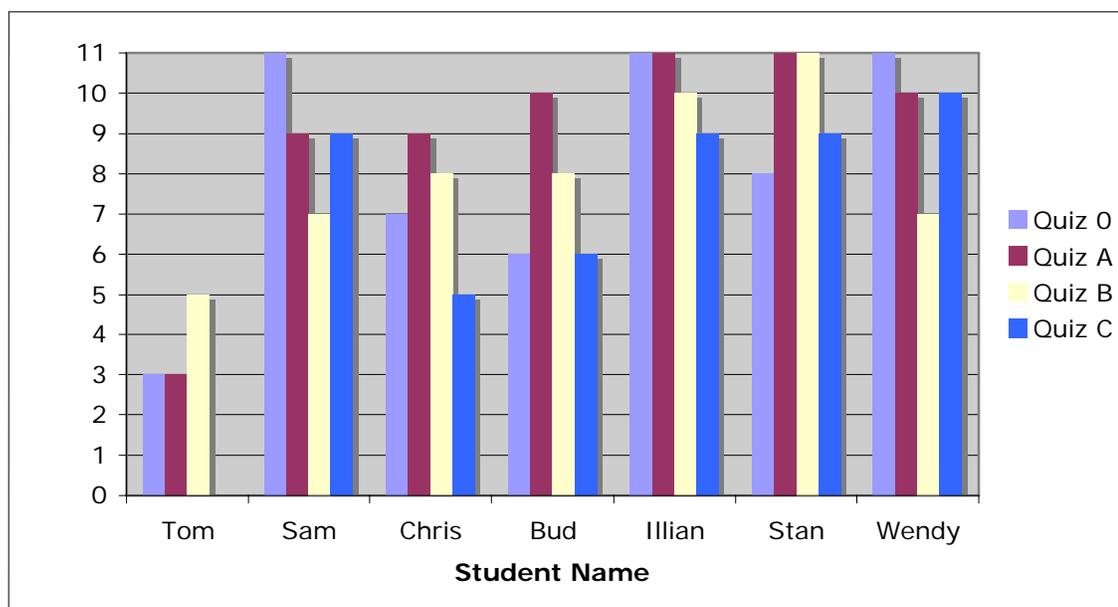
The standard deviation shows that although the average was higher on quiz 0 (first no treatment) than on quiz B (anticipation guide lesson), the standard deviation was greater on quiz 0.

Next I discuss the results of each student's quiz results by comparing pairs of treatments, beginning with quizzes 0 (first no treatment) and A (K-W-L treatment). There were a total of seven students in the study and each quiz was worth eleven points. Most of the students performed better or the same on quiz A than quiz 0: three students improved, and two obtained the exact same score on both quizzes. The other two students did worse on quiz A than quiz 0. It is important to note, however, that the two that performed worse, Sam and Illian, had obtained perfect scores on the first quiz. Scores from quizzes 0 (no treatment) and B (anticipation guide treatment) show that four students did better on quiz B and three students did better on quiz 0. The results of quiz A (K-W-L treatment) and B (anticipation guide treatment) show the greatest difference in the number of students who performed better with one strategy over another. Most students obtained the same scores or higher on quiz A: five did better, and one did the

same. The seventh student was the only one who did better on quiz B than quiz A. The fourth comparison is between the quiz scores for the first (quiz 0) and final no treatment (quiz C) readings. Interestingly, five of the students did worse on the final no treatment quiz and only two did better. All students performed better or the same on both quiz A (K-W-L) and quiz B (Anticipation guide) than on quiz C (final no treatment): Five performed better and two obtained the same score on each quiz. Tom scored zero points on quiz C. Refer to figure 4.2 for comparisons of quiz scores per student.

The paired Student's t-test analysis of the differences between means yielded a t of -1.03 for treatment pair 0A, 0.130 for treatment pair 0B, and 1.62 for treatment pair AB. Assuming the null hypothesis, the probabilities are as follows: 0.341 for treatment pair 0A, 0.901 for treatment pair 0B, and 0.156 for treatment pair AB. The t-tests showed that average results for quiz pairs 0A, 0B, and AB all failed to reject the null hypotheses (See appendix Q for the detailed paired Student's t-test results). In other words, statistically speaking, all of the results are the same and the pre-reading strategies did not significantly improve the quiz scores. However, a t-test analysis of the differences between means of quizzes 0 and C yielded a t of 2.46. The probability of this result is 0.0341. The t-test analysis rejected the null hypothesis; the differences in these two scores show statistical significance. The students' superior performance on the first no-treatment quiz was significantly better than their performance on the final no-treatment quiz.

Figure 4.2: Quiz Score Comparisons Per Student



Discussion of Results

Now that the results have been presented, I will connect them to the research questions. Are K-W-L charts and anticipation guides effective pre-reading strategies for ELLs? Is one of the above-mentioned strategies more effective than the other for building background as well as helping ELLs make active links between old and new knowledge? I discuss quantitative and then qualitative results to answer these research questions.

Although the students performed the best on the quiz with the K-W-L lesson treatment, the differences in mean scores between all of the treatments were not significant.

Therefore, statistically, I can't suggest that K-W-L lessons or anticipation guide lessons are effective pre-reading strategies for ELLs. The differences in mean scores between the K-W-L lesson and anticipation guide lesson treatments were not significant either, which

means I can not statistically suggest that K-W-L lessons are superior to anticipation guide lessons for building background as well as helping ELLs make active links between old and new knowledge. However, the qualitative results from the students' critical lesson reflections typically make more promising suggestions about the effectiveness of both strategies. I also include my own reflections on each lesson and connect it to the relevant research on the topics. These results also discuss which strategy the students perceived as helping them more.

After all of the quizzes were taken, the students received the results of their quizzes and were given a questionnaire to complete. Sam did not complete the questionnaire because she had to return to her home country due to an unexpected family emergency. The students were asked if they thought the K-W-L lesson, the lesson that obtained the highest mean score, helped them understand the story more than if they were to read it alone. All of the students except for Wendy responded "yes." From my perspective, I found that students benefited from the background building and vocabulary preparation in the W portion lesson. They used the question portion as a means to predict the reading, and they used the L portion to summarize and memorize the information after reading it. During the lesson, at first the students had nothing to add to "what they knew" about baptism and John the Baptist. Then, the one student in the class with many years of formal education in Catholicism (who wasn't in the study) began adding to the "Know" column. After that, there were many "ahhhh" murmurs and the students began building off one another's information bits and connecting the information to places

they've heard it before. One student commented something to the effect of, "Oh yeah...I read about baptisms in a novel once."

When the students were asked if they thought the anticipation guide lesson helped them, Bud and Illian both responded "no" and the other four said "yes." The results of the anticipation guide treatment showed that the students typically performed better on the anticipation guide lesson than on the final no treatment results but not better than they performed on the first no treatment quiz. These results surprised me; I expected more than four students to do better on the anticipation guide lesson than on the first no treatment. Typically in class, I had perceived that controversial class discussions not only helped motivate the students to read but they also helped the students identify a purpose for reading the material. My belief was based partially on the research I had read on the topic and partially on my own teaching experience. L1 and L2 experts have suggested that when students are motivated to read (Grabe & Stoller, 2001) and can find a purpose for reading (Tierney & Cunningham, 1984), they can comprehend more. The low performance on treatment B was also a surprise to me because just as a K-W-L chart, anticipation guides help introduce the key topics of a reading, which serves to help focus L1 students' attention (Head & Readence, 1992). However, maybe I need to consider that perhaps my students' Asian cultures play a stronger role than the suggested L1 researched strategies. Perhaps Ho's (1994) suggestions are factors that may explain why anticipation guides may not be as effective for ELLs as they are for L1 students.

Ho's (1994) discussion is in regard to Confucian heritage cultures. He states that creating controversies in these cultures is negative; all of the students in my study come

from cultures that may share the same views. If this is the case, discussing the controversial issues in the anticipation guide may not have motivated my students. They may have even felt uncomfortable. This is magnified by the fact that none of them had previous education in Christianity before and are participating in a controversial lesson on common Christian morals in a Catholic school.

Yet there is another possible reason why the anticipation guide lesson wasn't as successful as I thought it would be; what is controversial in the United States may not be controversial in other societies. I revisit Stapleton's (2001) suggestions to explain this possibility. He compared critical thinking skills between students in Japan and the United States and suggested that although there is little difference between the two groups, there is a difference in what is considered a controversial topic or not. The example I found of this in my anticipation guide lesson pertained to the issue of the death penalty. If there is no death penalty in my students' home countries, they may not have strong views on the subject. Finally, the results of treatment B, when compared to the first no treatment, also may indicate the need for multiple scaffolding activities to be incorporated into the pre-reading phase when the students lack sociocultural background knowledge in the topics. This will be discussed in more detail later.

When asked which of the two strategies helped them understand the respective reading more, six of the students said the K-W-L chart lesson. Wendy was the only one who said the anticipation guide lesson helped her more; she said it was an interesting lesson for her. Here are some of the reasons why students said the K-W-L lesson helped them more than the anticipation guide lesson:

Illian: It gives me more information

Bud: Because it has important words and questions

Stan: I like to find questions first and try my best to answer them; it's an easy way to study.

Tom: I can understand a story better with a summary.

Finally, the results of the final no treatment passage appear as though the students did not apply the strategies they had used during the week independently for their final reading. These results surprised me as well. Lack of effort on the final reading and quiz could be a factor; perhaps they were tired of the readings and quizzes by the fourth day in a row! These results indicate that it would have been important to re-emphasize before every lesson that their quizzes and participation would be graded. On the other hand, maybe the first reading was easier to understand than the other readings despite the care I took to make sure all of the readings were within three tenths of each other on the grade level readability scale. It's also important to re-examine what the L1 experts discuss about the issue of transfer. Opinions among the L1 reading experts vary on whether or not the long-term goal of any efficient strategy should be for students to be able to eventually use it independently and whether or not a strategy that doesn't support transfer is worth the effort (Tierney & Cunningham, 1984). Readence, Moore, and Rickelman (2000) have critiqued anticipation guides, arguing they don't support transfer because they are teacher-directed activities. It is a possibility that neither strategy in my research supported transfer.

In light of the students who did worse on the quizzes that used pre-reading strategies, I would like to consider the level of difficulty of the reading passages and quizzes for each student. Students who did poorly on the first and final no treatments benefited the most from using pre-reading strategies. Students who did well on the readings regardless of the strategies used did not seem to benefit from the reading strategies; in fact, they did worse in many cases than on the first no treatment. These cases brought down the averages for the students who struggled more with the first reading and benefited more from the pre-reading strategies. However, it is important to mention again that every student did better or the same on both quizzes involving pre-reading strategies than on the final no treatment reading and quiz.

This leads me to think two things. First of all, perhaps strong L2 readers demonstrate the cognitive process of brainstorming automatically when they read similar to strong L1 readers, as the L1 reading experts I cited in my literature review stated (Beers, 2003; Tierney & Cunningham, 1984). If this is the case, the readers in my study didn't need the K-W-L lesson because the readings were not difficult for them to comprehend independently. Additionally, these activities could have sidetracked the more advanced readers. This is a potential hazard of anticipation guides, as I discussed in my literature review as well (Dole, Greer, & Wardrop, 1991). Religion is a subject we have never talked about in ESL and the students surprisingly had many random questions they began asking on the K-W-L day such as, "What's the difference between Catholicism and Christianity? This caught me off guard, considering they all had been in a sheltered introduction to Christianity class for the prior five months. I made an effort to keep the

students focused on the theme of the lesson: baptism. For another example, the student Sam, who scored a perfect score on the first quiz, did two points worse on the second quiz. During the K-W-L lesson, she went off-topic discussing how popular *The Da Vinci Code* was in her home country. She said she had heard that many Christians didn't like it and began asking question about why. Considering the reading was about John the Baptist and baptism, a theme that is not relevant in *The Da Vinci Code*, I think it took her off-track.

Another point to consider is that regardless of which pre-reading strategy is used, ESL teachers must also build background in other ways; K-W-L charts and anticipation guides alone do not build very much (Readence, et al. 2000). ESL teachers should make sure to build background for topics (Zhaohua, 2004) through the use of techniques such as pictures, video clips, key content vocabulary preparation, etc. (Grabe & Stoller, 2001). I found this to be especially necessary for the anticipation guide, which allows for less background building than K-W-L chart.

A final factor to consider with my research questions is the amount of time spent on each reading. The two lessons that used the pre-reading strategies took an average of thirty-five minutes longer than the two no-treatment readings. The fact that the students spent more time on these lessons may be a confounding factor in my research.

Now that the results have been presented and discussed, the final chapter will conclude with a capstone summary, another look at the literature review, a discussion of the limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 5: THE CONCLUSION

In this capstone, I have examined K-W-L charts and anticipation guides to see if they are effective pre-reading strategies for ELLs. I also sought to discover if one of the above-mentioned strategies is more effective than the other for building background as well as helping ELLs make active links between old and new knowledge. I conclude in this chapter by reflecting on major learning from this capstone, addressing the limitations of my study, introducing options for future research, by summarizing the literature and reconnecting it with my results and research question, and finally by examining the implications for Coulee.

Reflections on Major Learning

The most interesting things I learned from this capstone project pertained to the important role of students' cultures in the learning process. I discovered that the primary difference between L1 and L2 reading research is that the latter must address issues of culture and ethnicity as equally salient issues alongside of language. I have learned to be cautious of suggestions that strategies that have been widely supported in the L1 field must be helpful for ELLs as well. Instead, I plan on maintaining close contact with primary SLA sources to make sure to stay current on L2 reading research.

Conducting my research also changed my opinion regarding the effectiveness of anticipation guides. In the future, I don't plan on taking the time to write anticipation guides for new lessons. However, the idea did occur to me that I could incorporate lessons where the students are required to write anticipation guides on readings of their choice as a means of discovering what issues they believe are controversial. This lesson could be especially useful if there were many students who shared the same home country in one class; the students would be the facilitators of the lesson.

Another major reflection about this experience pertained to the value for me to use classroom action research as a teacher. I like its holistic approach to educational research; teachers use data from multiple sources, both qualitative and quantitative, to accurately explore and assess their questions about their practices and how they are interpreted in their own classrooms and environments (Hendricks, 2006). As a part of exploring the whole environment, action research recognizes the role of the students as co-creators of the environment. I also am interested in action research because of its cyclical nature of reflection, action, and evaluation. Teachers first reflect on their practices and choose a question they have. Then they act on their reflections by implementing a plan of action. After that, they evaluate their plan of action, which leads to further reflection on their question, action, and evaluation. This cycle continues until the teacher is satisfied with the outcome (Hendricks, 2006). Every teacher knows that teaching is not an exact science! Constant reflection, action, and evaluation in order to suit learners' needs is a process every good educator does.

I see action research as a means to continue to explore my questions about reading strategies with my students. In regard to its strong focus on students as collaborators, I found my students' critical lesson reflections so valuable that I felt compelled to start implementing more opportunities for my students to give me feedback right away. I have created two questionnaires to do this for different class activities so far. In the future, I plan on having my students do more journaling, questionnaires, interviews, etc. specifically on reading strategies. Once I saw how the teacher-directed strategies may have adversely affected the stronger readers, I feel compelled to have them share what strategies they use independently for themselves. This may benefit the stronger readers as well as students who struggle more if the stronger readers are willing to share their strategies. Through the cyclical process of action research, we can work together more efficiently to aid the L2 reading comprehension process.

Limitations

This study presents some limitations to be considered. These limitations pertain to group size, the experimental group approach, and issues pertaining to authentic and valid forms of L2 assessment. First of all, my group size of seven participants was small. I originally expected two more; however, one was moved into another level of ESL and another unexpectedly returned to her home country the week before first semester final exams. The experimental approach of having multiple treatments given to one group of students who haven't been randomly assigned and pre-tested may have affected the results as well (Brown & Rodgers, 2004). There is no way of telling how the K-W-L

chart lesson may have affected the anticipation guide lesson that was given the following day. Ideally, I would have been able to use a more classic method involving three groups: a control group and two experimental groups, each taught with a different pre-reading strategy (Brown & Rodgers, 2004).

Authentic assessment was also a limitation in my study for three main reasons: L1 testing issues, question-type factors, and memory factors. Ideally, true assessment of a learner's comprehension of content material is done in their L1 (Stansfield, 1996). Considering there were three different L1 language groups in the study, it would have been very difficult to find translators who could directly translate all of the contents of the four quizzes. Even if I could find qualified translators, there would be a strong possibility that not all of content could be directly translated. This would lead to an adaptation of the quizzes, which could in turn affect the results as well (Stansfield, 1996). Instead of assessing in the participants' L1s, I took steps in order to eliminate bias in the quizzes to the best degree possible. I read the directions of the test in English aloud, gave them fifteen minutes to read and re-read the readings, and allowed them an unlimited amount of time to take the test (Garcia, 1991; Stansfield, 1996). I also allowed them to use electronic translators on both the readings and quizzes, even though research suggests that bilingual dictionaries do not significantly improve L2 test scores (Stansfield, 1997).

Another main reason why the assessment in my study was a limitation was because of the difficulty in making sure that all of the questions on the quizzes were exactly the same question-types. I took great care make sure that all four tests were close to the same

reading levels and had the roughly the same reading ease percentages in addition to using Johnston's (1981) question-type taxonomy of writing textually explicit questions (as cited in Garcia, 1991). This is when the question and answer can be found explicitly in a single sentence in the text.

Short versus long-term memory is an important subject worthy of consideration for my study as well. My participants took the quizzes immediately after reading the passages. Immediate recall assessments cannot effectively measure whether the information was scaffolded enough to be successfully transferred into a student's long-term memory. This leads to a need for further research.

Future Research

The results of this study indicate the possibilities for future research in the areas of pre-reading strategies and the proper building of sociocultural background knowledge for ELLs. I expressed concern earlier in this chapter that the reading strategies seemed to have impeded understanding of the readings for the participants who obtained perfect scores on the first no treatment quiz. Do these pre-reading strategies harm students when the readings are below their grade level reading abilities? Also, the use of K-W-L charts and anticipation guides appeared to have aided comprehension for most of the participants in terms of short-term memory. However, would I have seen similar gains in understanding through the use of delayed recall measures at a later point in time? Additionally, did the use of these two strategies provide enough background for these students to understand related stories in the New Testament when they encounter them in

their religion class? This question relates to the issue of teacher facilitated versus the independent use of reading strategies. How and with what degree of facility can the participants in this study employ the use of these strategies independently? K-W-L charts certainly provide an easier solution to this problem for students compared to anticipation guides. In fact, Stan alluded to this when he said, “I like to find questions first and try to answer them; it’s an easy way to study.” The use of controversy in aiding comprehension for different populations of ELLs is also a question for future research. I would be interested in finding out if ELLs from Western countries, such as my Mexican students for example, benefit more from anticipation guides than ELLs from Asian countries. I question this because of Ho’s (1994) suggestion that it is not socially acceptable to create controversies in Asian cultures.

Conclusion and Implications

In examining ELLs reading comprehension abilities, it is essential to understand the role of culture and sociocultural background on comprehension as well as how it relates to a reader’s schema. It has been discovered that readers don’t just employ local strategies (e.g., vocabulary knowledge, etc.) in order to comprehend what they read; they employ global ones as well, such as the use of their sociocultural background knowledge and prediction skills (Carrell, 1984, p. 333). Therefore, as teachers we need explore how to aid the use of these global strategies. From these understandings, we can create classroom environments where authentic and meaningful lessons that engage students, build background, and activate prior knowledge play active roles in the learning

experiences. I have explored the ways that K-W-L charts and anticipation guides, two pre-reading strategies, can help create this environment. It has been well documented that the use of K-W-L charts and anticipation guides, activate prior knowledge for L1 readers (Tierney & Cunningham, 1984) and I answer my research question by suggesting that they are both successful strategies to use with ELLs as well. I also suggest K-W-L charts as being more effective than anticipation guides as a means to build background as well as help ELLs make active links between old and new knowledge. I conclude this capstone by exploring the implications of my research for Coulee.

I will facilitate staff developments at Coulee to help facilitate an understanding of the important role of sociocultural background knowledge in the comprehension of content material. As I stated in the introduction of my literature review, reading is not a passive activity in which readers are filling up their brains with knowledge and information. On the contrary, it is an interactive activity in which readers are actively connecting the new information they are reading with their prior experiences and knowledge. The product of this combining of experiences and areas of knowledge, the meaning, is unique to each individual reader (Carrell, 1984; Swaffar, 1988). Content Christian concepts may be easy to understand for students with strong Christian educations. However, these same concepts may have completely different meanings for ELLs with no prior Christian educations. Thus, the process of learning this content may be very challenging. My research question asked if K-W-L charts and anticipation guides were effective pre-reading strategies for ELLs. I also asked if one of the above-mentioned strategies was more effective than the other for building background as well as helping ELLs make

active links between old and new knowledge. Because I found that K-W-L charts and anticipation guides are effective pre-reading strategies for these purposes, I will encourage Coulee teachers to employ them in addition to other background building strategies by facilitating staff development sessions. I will especially promote the use of K-W-L lessons because my research suggested it was a more successful lesson than the anticipation guide lesson. If Coulee teachers can aid the comprehension of Christian concepts for ELLs who come from non-Christian backgrounds, these students can acquire the content with greater ease and efficiency. Then, the students will become more successful in their religion classes, which will in turn improve their grade point averages. If our goal as a Coulee faculty is to guide our students as they “develop to their fullest potential”, as the Coulee brochure states, we will all recognize sociocultural background’s role in our students’ learning experiences and employ strategies to build it.

APPENDIX A

Dear Coulee Staff,

I'm doing my capstone for my MA in ESL on how different pre-reading strategies help aid reading comprehension for our English language learners. I'm particularly focusing on how sociocultural background knowledge affects reading comprehension. Please help me out by answering these questions! You may put your name on it if you wish. Below is a list of possible discussion points. However, please feel free to go beyond this list.

1. What issues/themes/concepts have your ELLs struggled with the most? Why do you think they struggle with these issues?
2. What are some examples of activities you do in your classroom to help your students understand what they read?
3. Do you think it's important to know about the dominant religions of the ELLs' home countries and cultures? Please explain. If yes, how important is it to bring these religions into your classrooms?

Thanks!! Please return to my PO box.
Sincerely,

Ms. Kristie O'Brien

APPENDIX B

Entrance Questionnaire
Coulee High School

Name: _____ Home country/nation: _____ Grade: _____

Please answer the following questions about your experience with English:

Describe your experience with English from birth to 5 years of age:

Have you ever lived in an English speaking country? If yes, where? For how many weeks, months, or years? Describe this experience:

Did you go to an English immersion or a bilingual school in your home country? In other words, did you have any other class besides for English class in English at your school in your home country?

Please write how many minutes a week you studied English in school and at academy below: (write an x in the blank if you did not have an English education)

Grade Kindergarten - In school: _____ At academy: _____

Grade 1 - In school: _____ At academy: _____

Grade 2 - In school: _____ At academy: _____

Grade 3 - In school: _____ At academy: _____

Grade 4 - In school: _____ At academy: _____

Grade 5 - In school: _____ At academy: _____

Grade 6 - In school: _____ At academy: _____

Grade 7 - In school: _____ At academy: _____

Grade 8 - In school: _____ At academy: _____

Grade 9 - In school: _____ At academy: _____

Grade 10 - In school: _____ At academy: _____

Grade 11 - In school: _____ At academy: _____

Describe how you studied English in each grade below:

Did you study with grammar workbooks and exercises? Describe your grammar book.

Did you practice speaking in English? Describe how you practiced it.

Did you read in English? Describe what books you read.

Did you practice listening in English? Describe how you practiced it.

What do you think is *the best* thing to do to improve your English?

What are other good things you can do to improve your English?

APPENDIX C

1. In your home country, how often did you talk about or learn about Christianity **from your family members or friends**? Please write an “x” on one blank below.

_____ Never

_____ About a couple of times a year

_____ About once – three times a month

_____ About once a week

_____ About two or three times a week

_____ Almost every day or every day

2. If you did learn about Christianity from your family members, what age did you begin learning about Christianity from them?

I was _____ years old when I began learning about Christianity from family members.

3. In your home country, how often did you talk about or learn about Christianity in **school** (e.g. school, academy, church school)? Please write an “x” on one blank below.

_____ Never

_____ About a couple of times a year

_____ About once – three times a month

_____ About once a week

_____ About two or three times a week

_____ Almost every day or every day

4. If you did learn about Christianity in a formal educational setting (e.g. school, church school, academy, cram school, etc.) what age did you begin learning about Christianity?

I was _____ years old when I began learning about Christianity in school.

APPENDIX D

Title: The Rich Young Ruler

One day a rich young ruler came to Jesus and fell on his knees before him. He said, "Good teacher, what must I do to live forever?" Jesus told him to keep the commandments. "Which ones?" the man asked. Jesus started telling him some of the 10 commandments; "Do not murder, do not steal, do not lie about people, honor your father and mother."

Then he mentions a commandment, not one of the 10 commandments, but one from the book of Leviticus from the Bible, "Love your neighbor as yourself." God told the people to not get revenge, or to stay angry with anyone. Instead, they were to love their neighbor as they loved themselves.

The young man said he had kept all these commands from the time he was a boy. He had lived a good life. The Bible says that Jesus looked at him and loved him, but Jesus looked into the man's heart and saw something that was keeping him from becoming a follower of Jesus. Jesus told him that if he wanted to be perfect, he must sell the things he owned and give the money to the poor. Then he would have treasure in heaven, and he could follow Jesus. The young man's face fell and he sadly went away because he had a lot of money that he would not give away to the poor.

After the young man left, Jesus talked to his followers about how hard it is for a rich man to enter heaven. "It is easier," he said, "for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, but with God all things are possible."

This story can be found in the Bible in Luke 18:18-30.

Passage 0 (no treatment)
Without Verse: Flesch Reading Ease: 80.1
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 6.0
Words: 298

APPENDIX E

Name _____ Date _____ Total points: _____/

11

Assessment of *Passage 0*

Story: The Rich Young Ruler

1. What did the young ruler ask Jesus? (1 point)

2. Jesus told him three things he should *not* do. He was not to: (3 points)

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. Jesus told him two things he *should* do. He should: (2 points)

a. _____

b. _____

4. To be perfect, Jesus told the rich young man to _____ the things he owned and _____ to the poor. (2 points)

5. Did the rich young man do what Jesus asked him to do? Write *yes* or *no*. Then explain what the rich young man did. (1 point)

6. Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." What does this mean? (2 points)

Flesch Reading Ease: 98.2
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 2.2

APPENDIX F

Title: John the Baptist

Mary, the mother of Jesus was a relative of Elizabeth, the mother of John. An angel appeared to Mary and told her that she was pregnant with Jesus. She went to see Elizabeth and learned that she was pregnant too. Elizabeth and her husband Zechariah were older and their child was a very special child. He was chosen by God for a special mission. That mission was to tell the people to get ready for the coming of Jesus.

John went through all the country around the Jordan telling the people they should get baptized. Then they would be able to ask to have their sins forgiven. Many people came to confess their sins and he baptized them in the Jordan River.

John told them that they must live right. They asked him what they should do. He said that if they had two coats they should share with a person who did not have a coat, and if they had food, they should share with those who did not. The tax collectors asked what they should do and he told them to be honest in their collection of taxes and to not collect more than they were required to do. The soldiers asked what they should do, and he told them to not take money from people illegally, to always tell the truth and not falsely accuse people. They were to be happy with their pay and not complain about it.

John always spoke the truth, even when people didn't want to hear the truth. He fearlessly confronted King Herod with the evil things he had done. Eventually this stand for the truth would cost John his life.

This story came from Luke 3.

Passage A (with K-W-L)
Without Verse:
Flesch Reading Ease: 81.7
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 5.7
Words: 300

APPENDIX G

Process of a K-W-L lesson:

1. First, I had a K-W-L chart with the main topic on a Word document on my computer and I had it displayed on the large screen in the classroom (see appendix * for an example of the class's completed K-W-L chart). Each student had their own K-W-L chart worksheet as well.
2. Then, I asked the students to write down what they knew about the topic on their K-W-L charts and solicited responses to record on the computer, using various techniques to get them to actively explore their prior knowledge. The students copied/modified the responses on their individual sheets.
3. Then, as a class, the students categorized their responses into groups by cutting and pasting the information on the Word document.
4. Next we color-coded and labeled these categories on the Word document.
5. Then we moved to the *W* column where the students explored what they wondered about the topic based on their responses under the *K* column in order to link the *unknown* to the *known* (Beers, 2003, p. 86). We generated questions as a group first, and then they were required to generate two more questions independently on their own K-W-L charts. They each took turns typing in their questions under the *W* column on the Word document.
6. Next the students were required to independently read *passage A*.
7. Immediately after reading the passage, the students had four minutes to write down as many things they *learned* as they could on their own K-W-L charts. The person who wrote the most things they learned won a piece of candy for a prize. Then they took turns typing their responses under the *L* on our Word chart while the rest of the class copied the information they didn't have on their individual charts. The students were encouraged to seek the answers for the questions they had generated under the *W*.

APPENDIX H

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class/period: _____

Topic: _____

K-W-L Chart

K (Things you know about the topic <i>before</i> you read about it)	W (Questions you have about the topic <i>before</i> you read about it)	L (Things you learned about the topic <i>after</i> you read about it. Try to answer your questions.)

APPENDIX I

Name _____ Date _____ Total points: _____/11

Assessment of Passage A

Story: John the Baptist

1. Elizabeth's child was John the Baptist. He was a special child. Why? (1 point)

2. What was John the Baptist's mission? (1 point)

3. John went through all the country and Jordan to tell the people they should get *baptized*. According to John, why should the people do this? (1 point)

4. Did some people get baptized? Write *yes* or *no*. Explain a detail (e.g. where and what they did). (1 point)

5. John told the people they should live right and share. What were two things they could share? (2 points)

6. What did John tell the tax collectors to do? (1 point)

7. John told the soldiers three things they should do. What were 2 of them? (2 points)

8. What did John do to the King Herod? (1 point)

9. What did John the Baptist always do that eventually cost him his life? (1 point)

Flesch Reading Ease: 93.2

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 1.9

APPENDIX J

Title: Jesus' Trial and Death

The priests and rulers of the Jews did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God and they considered him a criminal for claiming he was. They sent the Jewish soldiers to capture Jesus and then took him to Caiaphas, the high priest where he was put on trial. The priests and rulers agreed that he was guilty of claiming to be God's son and they agreed that he should be put to death. Under the Roman law, however, the Jewish leaders could not condemn a person to death. Therefore, the Jewish rulers took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor. Pilate couldn't find a reason for putting Jesus to death, but after a long time, he told the Jewish rulers to do what they wanted to do with Jesus.

The soldiers mocked Jesus by calling him a king even though they didn't believe he was a king. They put a crown of thorns on his head for a mock crown and a staff in his hand. They also put a scarlet robe on him, spit on him, and they whipped him. Then the soldiers took Jesus away to a hill called Calvary where they crucified him and put him to death on a wooden cross. But even while he was on the cross, he forgave those who were crucifying him. He said, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing." Even while Jesus was on the cross, new people who met him began to believe he was the Son of God. One of these people was a Roman soldier. He was watching the events when suddenly there was a great earthquake. Then this soldier became afraid and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" When Jesus died, the thick curtain in the Temple was torn apart. It ripped from the top to the bottom. This curtain had separated two rooms. In one room only the high priest could go, and in the other room, others could go. When Jesus died, he made it possible for all people to go to God and worship him without anyone else in between. Jesus is now our high priest.

This story came from the Bible: Matthew 26: 47-67; Matthew 27:11-26; Matthew 27:32-65; John 19:1-37

Passage B (with A. Guide)

Without Verse:

Flesch Reading Ease: 80.8

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 5.8

Words: 374

APPENDIX K

Process of a reading lesson using an anticipation guide:

1. First, I identified the main concepts to be learned from the reading and wrote them down, a process similar to writing the objectives for a lesson.
2. Next I determined how each of the main concepts would support or challenge the students' beliefs. I took the students' religious backgrounds into consideration to support my research goals.
3. Then I created five statements that I perceived would directly support or challenge my students' opinions.
4. After that, I typed the statements in order from the least controversial to the most controversial. I included two columns before each statement, one with the heading *before reading* and the other with the heading *after reading*.
5. Next, I presented the guide and instructed the students to complete them independently. I instructed them to read each statement and write *A* if they agreed with it and *DA* if they disagreed.
6. Then we discussed each statement as a class after we went through and tallied the responses on an overhead transparency. I made sure to keep the focus of the discussion on only the topics presented.
7. After the discussion, the students were asked to read the passage B.
8. Following the reading, they revisited each statement and wrote *A* or *DA* under the *after reading* column.
9. Finally, we tallied any alterations in opinions as a group on the overhead and discussed them.

APPENDIX L

Name: _____

Anticipation Guide

Directions: Read each statement and write *yes* in the blank if you believe the statement and could support it or write *no* in the blank if you do not believe the statement and could not support it. We will revisit these statements after we finish reading the passage *Jesus' trial and death* and have a class discussion.

Before reading	Statement	After reading
	1. I believe in a complete separation of church and state. (i.e. The government should not have anything to do with religion. This is what the United states has.)	
	2. I believe that criminals who did serious crimes should get the death penalty as long as they get a fair trial . (I.e. I believe the government should be allowed to put criminals to death)	
	3. I believe I should forgive people if they hurt people I love or me.	
	4. I believe in spiritual miracles .	
	5. I think that soldiers can hurt prisoners in certain cases.	

APPENDIX M

Name: _____ Date: _____ Total Points: ____/11

Assessment of Passage B
Story: Jesus' Trial and Death

1. What did the priests and rulers tell the soldiers to do to Jesus? (1 point)

2. Why did the priests and rulers put Jesus on trial? (1 point)

3. What happened at the trial? (1 point)

4. How did the soldiers mock Jesus? (5 points)

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

5. What did Jesus ask his father to do? (1 point)

6. Explain the two miracles that happened after Jesus died. (2 points)

Flesch Reading Ease: 82.5

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 4.0

APPENDIX N

Title: Ten Lepers

Leprosy was a terrible, infectious, skin disease. It could spread easily from an infected person to others. There were strict rules in society that lepers had to observe; lepers had to live outside the camp away from other people so the disease would not spread. If the sores went away, the leper had to go to the priest to be examined and could not go back and live with his family unless the priest said that the leper was no longer contagious.

Sometimes people got the disease because they had disobeyed God. Once a king named Uzziah got leprosy because he rebelled against God. At the beginning of his reign, he was a good king, but later he began to disobey God. One day he decided to go into the temple to burn incense to God, however only the priests were allowed to do this, and he was not a priest. He ended up having to live in a separate house for the rest of his life.

The famous story about the ten lepers occurred when Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. The ten lepers met him, but stayed a distance away because the law of the society said a leper must not come near anyone and must call out, "Unclean!" so people would know he had leprosy. These men called out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" They knew he had healed others. Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priests, and as they were going, a wonderful thing happened; their skin became clean and free from leprosy! Nine of the men continued on to go see the priest, but one man turned back and came to Jesus. He was praising God with a loud voice and he fell at Jesus' feet and thanked him. Jesus asked where the other nine men were; ten were healed, but only one came back to say, "Thank you." Jesus told the man, "Rise and go. Your faith has made you well."

This story can be found in the Bible in Luke 17:11-19.

Passage C (Final no treatment)
Flesch Reading Ease: 78.0
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 6.0
Words: 362

APPENDIX O

Name _____ Date _____ Total points: _____/11

Assessment of Passage C
Story: Jesus the Healer

1. What is leprosy? (1 point)

2. Why did people with leprosy have to live away from others? (1 point)

3. When a leper's sores went away, what did they have to do? (1 point)

4. What is one reason why people sometimes got leprosy? (1 point)

5. Why did the King Uzziah get leprosy? (1 point)

6. What did King Uzziah have to do for the rest of his life? (1 point)

7. When Jesus and the 10 lepers met, why didn't they come near him? (1 point)

8. What did the 10 lepers say to Jesus when they saw him? (1 point)

9. Why did they say this to Jesus? (1 point)

10. What did Jesus do to them? (1 point)

11. Did they thank Jesus? Yes or no? Explain. (1 point)

Flesch Reading Ease: 87.1 - Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level:3.1

APPENDIX P

Post Questionnaire of Passages

1. Which quiz did you do the best on?

_____ The Rich Young Ruler

_____ John the Baptist

_____ Jesus' Trial and Death

_____ Ten Lepers

2. Why did you do the best on this quiz? Choose one answer below:

- a. The reading lesson (K-W-L chart lesson or anticipation guide lesson) helped me understand this story better than the other stories.
- b. This story was the easiest story to understand (with or without a reading lesson).
- c. The questions on this quiz were the easiest questions.
- d. I tried my hardest on this quiz.
- e. I knew what the quiz would be like (after taking other quizzes like it this week).

3. Did the K-W-L chart lesson help you understand the story John the Baptist better?

_____ Yes

_____ No

4. Did the anticipation guide lesson help you understand the story Jesus' Trail and Death better?

_____ Yes

_____ No

5. Which lesson helped you understand the reading better: K-W-L chart lesson or the Anticipation guide lesson?

_____ K-W-L chart lesson

_____ Anticipation guide lesson

6. Why? _____

APPENDIX Q

Paired Student's *t*-Test: Results for Treatments 0 and A

The results of a paired t-test performed at 11:15 on 27-JAN-2007

$t = -1.03$ degrees of freedom = 6

The probability of this result, assuming the null hypothesis, is 0.341

Group A: Number of items= 7

3.00 6.00 7.00 8.00 11.0 11.0 11.0

Mean = 8.14 95% confidence interval for Mean: 5.296 thru 10.99 Standard Deviation = 3.08 Hi = 11.0 Low = 3.00 Median = 8.00 Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 2.43

Group B: Number of items= 7

3.00 9.00 9.00 10.0 10.0 11.0 11.0

Mean = 9.00 95% confidence interval for Mean: 6.439 thru 11.56 Standard Deviation = 2.77 Hi = 11.0 Low = 3.00 Median = 10.0 Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 1.57

Group A-B: Number of items= 7

-4.00 -3.00 -2.00 0.00 0.00 1.00 2.00

Mean = -0.857 95% confidence interval for Mean: -2.886 thru 1.171 Standard Deviation = 2.19 Hi = 2.00 Low = -4.00 Median = 0.00 Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 1.71

Paired Student's *t*-Test: Results for Treatments 0 and B

The results of a paired t-test performed at 11:16 on 27-JAN-2007

$t = 0.130$ degrees of freedom = 6

The probability of this result, assuming the null hypothesis, is 0.901

Group A: Number of items= 7

3.00 6.00 7.00 8.00 11.0 11.0 11.0

Mean = 8.14 95% confidence interval for Mean: 5.296 thru 10.99 Standard Deviation = 3.08 Hi = 11.0 Low = 3.00 Median = 8.00 Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 2.43

Group B: Number of items= 7

5.00 7.00 7.00 8.00 8.00 10.0 11.0

Mean = 8.00 95% confidence interval for Mean: 6.150 thru 9.850 Standard Deviation = 2.00 Hi = 11.0 Low = 5.00 Median = 8.00 Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 1.43

Group A-B: Number of items= 7

-3.00 -2.00 -2.00 -1.00 1.00 4.00 4.00

Mean = 0.143 95% confidence interval for Mean: -2.550 thru 2.836 Standard Deviation = 2.91 Hi = 4.00 Low = -3.00 Median = -1.00 Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 2.29

Paired Student's *t*-Test: Results for Treatments 0 and C

The results of a paired t-test performed at 11:13 on 27-JAN-2007

t= 2.46 degrees of freedom = 6

The probability of this result, assuming the null hypothesis, is 0.049

Group A: Number of items= 7

3.00 6.00 7.00 8.00 11.0 11.0 11.0

Mean = 8.14 95% confidence interval for Mean: 5.296 thru 10.99 Standard Deviation = 3.08 Hi = 11.0 Low = 3.00 Median = 8.00 Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 2.43

Group B: Number of items= 7

0.00 5.00 6.00 9.00 9.00 9.00 10.0

Mean = 6.86 95% confidence interval for Mean: 3.590 thru 10.12 Standard Deviation = 3.53 Hi = 10.0 Low = 0.00 Median = 9.00 Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 2.43

Group A-B: Number of items= 7

-1.00 0.00 1.00 2.00 2.00 2.00 3.00

Mean = 1.29 95% confidence interval for Mean: 9.1989E-03 thru 2.562 Standard

Deviation = 1.38 Hi = 3.00 Low = -1.00 Median = 2.00 Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 1.00

Paired Student's *t*-Test: Results for Treatments A and B

The results of a paired t-test performed at 11:11 on 27-JAN-2007

t= 1.62 degrees of freedom = 6

The probability of this result, assuming the null hypothesis, is 0.156

Group A: Number of items= 7

3.00 9.00 9.00 10.0 10.0 11.0 11.0

Mean = 9.00 95% confidence interval for Mean: 6.439 thru 11.56 Standard Deviation = 2.77 Hi = 11.0 Low = 3.00 Median = 10.0 Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 1.57

Group B: Number of items= 7

5.00 7.00 7.00 8.00 8.00 10.0 11.0

Mean = 8.00 95% confidence interval for Mean: 6.150 thru 9.850 Standard Deviation = 2.00 Hi = 11.0 Low = 5.00 Median = 8.00 Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 1.43

Group A-B: Number of items= 7

-2.00 0.00 1.00 1.00 2.00 2.00 3.00

Mean = 1.00 95% confidence interval for Mean: -0.5104 thru 2.510 Standard Deviation = 1.63 Hi = 3.00 Low = -2.00 Median = 1.00 Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 1.14

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