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This study seeks to examine the impact of explicit vocabulary instruction on the productive vocabulary of ESL kindergarten students. Key influences include students' previous vocabulary production and authors such as Beck, McKeown, Kucan, Biemiller, Swain, and Silverman. The research method consisted of action research in the KLDM classroom and collected data with a teacher observation journal, checklists, and authentic assessments. The main findings were: 1) The vocabulary model presented by Beck et al. (2002) appears to work, more important is the teacher's role in choosing target vocabulary and creating meaningful, student-friendly definitions. 2) Valuable student connections are made when words are introduced in ways that activate prior knowledge. 3) Vocabulary instruction cannot be isolated for English learners; teaching the language structure and syntax required for vocabulary use must also be explicitly taught.

INCREASING VOCABULARY PRODUCTION THROUGH  
EXPLICIT VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary instruction is a best practice for students to be more successful in reading and in all content areas. Children learn vocabulary explicitly through instruction and implicitly through reading and listening. Schools have an expectation that students enter kindergarten with experience with books. Educators are noticing that many students need more exposure to books and literacy experiences when the students enter school; therefore, vocabulary development and an emphasis on production of new vocabulary is an important focus in the primary years. A core element to strong literacy skills is the depth of vocabulary knowledge and the size of a child's vocabulary is a dominant factor in predicting the child's reading ability (Coyne, Simmons, Kame'enui, and Stoolmiller, 2004).

An excellent way to improve a student's vocabulary is through read alouds which consist of looking at and reading books with children. The activity of reading aloud is a highly recommended way to prepare children for school experiences and reading readiness skills, with a list of benefits such as vocabulary development, having an adult's full attention, understanding the conventions of text, being exposed to the format of books in different genres, exposure to print which can lead to better understanding of letters, words, numbers, and engagement in linguistically complex conversations. These

benefits and many others are reasons to encourage families to read at home with their children in their first or second language.

Why are read alouds important for vocabulary growth? Kindergarten students are emergent readers who are usually not individually reading texts that surpass their listening vocabulary; therefore, these readers are not making significant vocabulary gains from exposure to texts at the students' reading levels. Kindergarten readers need exposure to texts such as a variety of language-rich poems and read alouds that are in the range of or slightly above their listening vocabulary. An excellent resource for vocabulary development is read alouds that contain words beyond a student's reading level that are read aloud. These books typically contain more complex structures and a more advanced vocabulary than books primary students read at their independent reading level (Beck & McKeown, 2007). This supports the need to research the effectiveness of using read alouds in combination with explicit vocabulary instruction to increase students' vocabulary development. If students are being read to less frequently, it can mean that children have been exposed to fewer words. Therefore, these children may have a smaller vocabulary than children who have been exposed to the rich language in picture books (Temple & Snow, 2003).

How many words does a student learn in a year? Nagy (1988) indicates that native English speaking children learn 3,000 new words every year, which is an average compared to other research. Stahl & Shiel (1992) reported that children learn from 1,000 to 5,000 new words per year. It is estimated that high school graduates need to know 75,000 English words, which means that students need to learn 10-12 words per day

between the ages of 2-17 (Snow & Kim, 2007). An average vocabulary builds from an estimated 3,500 root word meanings at the beginning of kindergarten to 6,000 by the end of second grade (Biemiller, 2001; Biemiller & Slonim, 2001) as cited in Baumann & Kame'enui (2004). When ELLs begin school, they need to increase the number of words learned per day in English in order to match their native English speaking peers. ELLs can build their English vocabulary, grammar, syntax, pragmatic understanding, and phonological skills on top of their knowledge of their native language. The extent of knowledge of their native language can help increase the number of English words learned per day. The numbers of words learned per day depend on many factors, but research suggests that children strengthen their vocabulary knowledge by reading (Snow & Kim, 2007). Consequently, poor readers are reading less and less challenging material leading these readers to the lower end of the range of vocabulary growth per year.

#### Purpose of the Research

I have worked as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher for four years. During this time, I have become increasingly aware of my students' need to increase their vocabularies by building their oral language and literacy skills in order to be more successful in kindergarten. When students have a limited number of words in their lexicon, they struggle with listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing. The purpose of this research project is to use read alouds in combination with vocabulary learning activities and the explicit model for teaching vocabulary advanced by Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, (2002) this model will be fully presented in chapter two. The model presented by Beck et al. (2002) involves target vocabulary from read alouds to be

explicitly taught by using student-friendly definitions and vocabulary activities. In this study, I want to increase production of target vocabulary in ESL kindergarten students.

#### Role of the Researcher

My role is to be an action researcher in my own classroom. The study will take place in the Kindergarten Language Development Model (KLDM) classroom. KLDM is a model which provides additional instruction for ELLs that possess the highest language need. It is a half day program in which students access intensive language through content in a separate kindergarten classroom. It extends the kindergarten curriculum in which the teacher pre-teaches, teaches, and re-teaches material. My role is to provide a foundation for ELLs that is language rich and literacy intensive in the KLDM setting.

#### Background of the Researcher

My curiosity about vocabulary development and teaching English Language Learners (ELLs) began when I was a mainstream third-grade teacher in Memphis, Tennessee, where my classroom was predominantly ELLs new to the country. Later in my teaching career, the year of teaching in Memphis would be instrumental in obtaining a position as an ESL teacher.

My interest in language and literacy continued when I moved to New York City to teach mainstream second-grade in Harlem, where the school participated in the Reading First grant, a government-funded program to improve literacy in underperforming schools. The Reading First grant provided the school with a literacy coach who modeled current literacy practices for teachers and provided support for teachers to implement those best practices into their own instruction such as: guided

reading, shared reading, leveled classroom libraries, effective read alouds and literacy assessments all of which positively impacted my teaching as an ESL teacher.

In addition to support from Reading First, the teachers participated in the New York City Reading Academy, which focused on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension strategies. My teaching experiences in Memphis and Harlem provided me with a solid foundation in literacy development and adapting instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners, all of which allowed me to be hired without an ESL teaching license at my current job as a kindergarten ESL teacher.

While I completed my ESL license through Hamline University, I continually evaluated my instruction to increase the rigor of the KLDM program. For the past four years, my school district has provided me with an ESL coach who has helped me develop a KLDM program that teaches oral language through the content of science, math, reading, and writing. Since I began implementing the KLDM program at my school, I have been instrumental in the change in how the entire kindergarten team teaches and the kindergarten curriculum. The mainstream teachers and I collaborated to create a classroom environment that developed oral language skills through Writer's Workshop and Reader's Workshop, which increased students' productive vocabulary, reading, and writing skills.

### Guiding Questions

The guiding questions for this study are centered on how to stimulate production of target vocabulary words in ESL kindergarten students. Further, I examine the following questions: 1. Does Beck, McKeown, and Kucan's (2002) vocabulary model

work with ESL students? 2. As a result of implementing this vocabulary model, do ESL kindergarten students produce target vocabulary that is explicitly taught?

### Summary of the Research

Vocabulary development is critical for academic success in all content areas. This research examines explicit instruction in order to build a solid vocabulary foundation in a language-rich environment. Vocabulary is an essential part of school especially in the primary years where students are building oral language skills in order to use academic language in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

### Chapter Overviews

In chapter one, I included the importance of this study. In the next chapter, I explain vocabulary development. Questions the next chapter will address include the following: 1. What is academic language and how can it be supported? 2. Why is vocabulary acquisition important? 3. Which methods and teaching strategies support vocabulary development? 4. How can read alouds support vocabulary development? Chapter three presents action research and how it supports target vocabulary research conducted within the classroom and assesses student production of vocabulary by using the data collection techniques of a checklist, teacher observation journal, and authentic assessment. Chapter four reveals the results of each of the four action research cycles. It examines that the vocabulary model by Beck et al. (2002) is effective with ESL kindergarten students' production of target vocabulary. Chapter four examines the results of explicit vocabulary instruction that connects to students' prior knowledge. It explores the relationship between student production of target vocabulary and classroom

environment where opportunities to produce and interact with the target vocabulary are provided. A major indicator of production is the focus of instruction in language structure and syntax examining how to produce the target vocabulary in a sentence. In chapter five, I reflect on the data conducted. I also discuss the implications for future study and recommendations for the ESL classroom. Chapter five also presents personal reflections and insights as a result of this study.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary knowledge is important in making academic progress. The foundation of listening, speaking, reading, and writing is based on vocabulary. Vocabulary instruction is imperative to prepare readers, writers, and speakers of English. This literature review will focus on the role of vocabulary development, the importance of academic language for ESL students, and teaching vocabulary by using implicit and explicit instructional strategies.

This chapter addresses a method of vocabulary instruction to develop students' target vocabulary production. The method is to create a vocabulary focused classroom environment by merging read alouds, explicit vocabulary instruction, and vocabulary learning activities. Further, will vocabulary instruction increase students' use of target vocabulary words; does Beck, McKeown, and Kucan's (2002) vocabulary model work with ESL kindergarten students; and as a result of implementing this vocabulary model, do ESL kindergarten students produce target vocabulary that is explicitly taught?

### Vocabulary Development

This section begins by describing how children build vocabulary and explains the differences in the acquisition process between native English speakers and non-native English speakers. It describes the importance of rich input and its impact on vocabulary

development. It continues with an overview of what it means to know a word. Lastly, this section discusses ELLs' vocabulary development.

### Building Vocabulary

Does socio-economic status (SES) affect a child's vocabulary? Hart & Risley (1995) conducted a two-and-a-half year longitudinal study which observed parents and children between the ages of one and two years old interacting in their natural home environment. The study focuses on the number of words spoken to a child, the impact spoken language has on a child's vocabulary, and the effects on academic progress. This study is important to the education of ELLs. Nationally many ELLs in the United States are living in poverty. The academic gap relates to English language use.

Most immigrant families are temporarily living in a low SES situation due to their immigrant status. The parents' previous education plays a large role in moving from a low SES situation into a high SES situation. The effects of low SES and a language barrier lead to an increased gap in English vocabulary for ELLs. This study is included in the literature review because most of the students participating in this study are from low SES homes.

Hart & Risley (1995) found that a child's home life and family's SES play a significant role in a child's vocabulary development even before the age of three-years-old. They observed that the number of utterances spoken to the child per hour ranged from 250 words in low SES homes up to 3,000 words per hour in higher SES homes. This finding revealed that the more the parents talked to their children, the more words

the child learned. Their results suggest that children from a low-socioeconomic background enter kindergarten with a severe linguistic disadvantage.

The finding showed that children from low-socioeconomic backgrounds add fewer words to a vocabulary that was already significantly smaller at age three than their peers from professional families. In addition, Hart and Risley's projections show an ever widening gap and the children's test scores in third grade show how unlikely it is that the gap will narrow with increasing years of experience without vocabulary instruction. This study did not specify if it included immigrants. By the end of second grade, there is 4,000 word difference in root word vocabulary between students in the highest and lowest vocabulary percentile (Biemiller, 2004). Until primary children with low vocabularies have a chance to build vocabulary in school, they will continue to lag behind more advanced children. With increased attention placed on vocabulary, there is hope for vocabulary development for children from low SES homes. Hart & Risley's (1995) research in investigating an achievement gap between children from low SES homes and children from higher SES homes is an example of why it is important for schools to stress vocabulary development beginning when a child enters kindergarten. It is important to recognize that regardless of parents SES, ELLs can benefit from explicit vocabulary instruction.

Given the findings of Hart & Risley's (1995) research, there is an emerging consensus that schools need to focus on vocabulary development beginning in the primary grades to aid in counteracting the gap in English word knowledge (Coyne et al., 2004). According to Biemiller (2004), an effective vocabulary intervention will consist of

30 minutes of extended vocabulary work as a normal part of the primary curriculum.

Adding two to three new words a day can add up to 400 words over the academic school year. If this number is combined with additional words learned at home many children with lower vocabularies would have a chance to move close to grade-level vocabulary.

However, given the understanding of the large gap between students of higher and lower socioeconomic backgrounds, it is vital to begin instruction in kindergarten. The chances of successfully addressing vocabulary differences in school are greatest in preschool and primary grades (Biemiller, 2004).

### Input Hypothesis

Children from low SES backgrounds and homes where English is not spoken, need vocabulary-rich conversations and interactions with read alouds in English. Such input will aid in developing a child's vocabulary. Krashen's Input Hypothesis is important to incorporate while teaching ELLs. According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis, learners acquire language by understanding messages, or comprehensible input, which is slightly above the learner's level. To make information more comprehensible to the ELL, a speaker may use paraphrasing, repetition of key points, using realia (real objects), or acting out meanings (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). A language learner is able to understand language containing unacquired grammar and vocabulary through context. This includes extra-linguistic information, such as a learner's schema of the world and previously learned language structures. The language teacher who teaches beginning ELLs provides scaffolding with visual aids and relates new information to previously learned information (Krashen, 1985).

Many ELLs come to school far behind a native English speaker's productive English vocabulary and comprehension vocabulary, which makes reading very difficult in English. ELLs learn English vocabulary at the same rate as native English speaking peers, but they remain below English-only children on vocabulary assessments (Snow & Kim, 2007). Krashen (1989) theorizes that word learning is best implemented through oral language and reading in context. Since vocabulary is a key predictor of reading comprehension, and since being able to learn content from textbooks is related to success in school, there is an immediate need to focus on ELLs' vocabulary.

### Output

Krashen argues that output is an indicator that second language acquisition has already happened in the learners' mind. He continues to claim that output is one source of self-input to the learner (Krashen 1989). The output hypothesis claims that producing language is a key method in second language acquisition. One of the functions of practicing language is to increase fluency in the target language. Fluency and accuracy are different areas in language production. Practice can increase fluency, but that does not mean that practice can always improve accuracy (Schmidt 1992).

Swain (1995) states there are three main functions of output in second language acquisition: noticing, hypothesis testing, and reflection. The first hypothesis is that output enhances noticing, meaning that there is a gap between what a learner wants to say and what the learner actually produces. This may lead learners to notice what they do not fully understand about a language, what they partially know, and which aspects of the

target language they need to improve upon. In other words, producing language may lead ELLs to identify some of their linguistic difficulties.

The second hypothesis of producing output is through hypothesis testing. Producing output is one way to determine if listeners understand the ELLs spoken discourse. Output can indicate that the learner has created his/her own hypothesis about the rules of the target language and is testing it out.

The third hypothesis of output production is that the learners' output is dynamic, due to reflection on their own target language use. The learners' output serves as a metalinguistic function which allows them to control and internalize their own linguistic knowledge.

Swain's three main functions of output in second language acquisition relates to my research question. My study focuses on whether ELLs will produce target vocabulary that is explicitly taught. The output functions of noticing, hypothesis testing, and reflection are processes that the students in my study may experience as they internalize and begin to produce the target vocabulary.

### Knowledge of a Word

What does it mean to know a word? Most students remember the traditional technique of finding words in a dictionary and copying the definitions. Definitions lead to a surface level understanding of a word. Memorizing a definition may not improve reading comprehension because words are used in a variety of contexts and have different pragmatic effects. Instruction based on definitional associations alone will impact word

knowledge, but it will not significantly affect reading comprehension (Beck, McKeown, & Omanson, 1985).

Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) explain that knowing a word contains both definitional and contextual information. Contextual knowledge means understanding words beyond the definition; such knowledge allows a deeper understanding of the word in various contexts. Both methods of categorizing words are essential to word knowledge. Yet, word knowledge is more than understanding a word; at an even higher level, it means having the capacity to produce the word in spoken and written contexts.

Word knowledge is a complex system that includes both receptive and productive vocabulary systems. According to Just & Carpenter (as cited in Senechal & Cornell, 1993), a receptive vocabulary can include words that children can understand but not produce; whereas, productive vocabulary includes words children can produce in oral discourse. There are two levels of word knowledge, the first being the extent of knowledge of a word and there are qualitatively different types of word knowledge. This first level, the degree a student knows a word, can be explained on the following scale offered by Dale, (1965).

1. I do not know the word.
2. I have seen or heard the word.
3. I know something about it: I can relate it to a situation.
4. I know it well, can explain it, and use it.

The second level of word knowledge contains different types of word knowledge. It is defined as the type of knowledge one possesses of a word and the uses where the

knowledge is placed. The earliest description is Cronbach's five dimensions (1942). In this model, word knowledge derives from how a person is asked to demonstrate knowledge of a word. The first level is being able to define a word, which is called generalization. The subsequent level is application, which is the ability to explain appropriate situations to use a word. The third level is the breadth of word knowledge by possessing multiple word meanings. Precision describes the fourth stage by applying a meaning to all situations and to recognize inappropriate use. The highest stage is defined as availability, which encompasses the actual use of a word in thinking and discourse.

Another scale of deep word knowledge is presented in Beck, McKeown, and Omanson, (1987) (as cited in Beck et al., 2002, p10).

1. No knowledge
2. General sense, such as knowing *disgusting* has a negative connotation.
3. Narrow, context-bound knowledge, such as knowing that a *radiant* bride is a happy beautiful one, but unable to describe *radiant* in another context.
4. Having knowledge of a word, but not being able to recall it readily enough to use it in appropriate situations.
5. Rich, decontextualized knowledge of a word's meaning, its relationship to other words, and its extension to metaphorical uses, such as understanding what someone is doing when he is *devouring* a sandwich.

Dale's stages, Cronbach's dimensions, and the dimensions from Beck, et al. of word knowledge begin to explain the complexity of what it really means to understand a word.

Why is deep word knowledge so essential to understanding a word? The importance of attaining a sense of deep word knowledge is to transfer word knowledge from short-term memory to long-term memory, due to the brain's unlimited capacity to store information. The more opportunities a student has to manipulate, think about, and produce a word, the more likely it is that the word will shift into the long-term memory (Decarrico, 2001).

In order for educators to assess vocabulary knowledge, it is imperative to choose measures that allow assessment of deep word knowledge. Using measures such as multiple choice tests or simple synonym matching only assess surface level vocabulary knowledge. This type of assessment relates to Dale's third stage of vocabulary knowledge which entails understanding something about the meaning of a word and can relate it to other situations. A surface level of vocabulary knowledge is related to Cronbach's five dimensions in terms of stage one, generalization, the ability to define a word, and stage two, application to different situations (Cronbach, 1942).

In order to differentiate between shallow and deep word knowledge, the assessment measure must incorporate higher cognitive processes and more in-depth communicative explanations. Dale's fourth stage of knowing the word well, explaining it, and using it portrays deep word knowledge. Another example of deep word knowledge is shown in an assessment that focuses on Cronbach's third-fifth dimension, as mentioned above, of breadth, precision, and availability. These stages and dimensions must be present when creating ways to assess student's word knowledge. If vocabulary instruction is to enhance students' verbal literacy development, it needs to produce knowledge at a

depth that makes connections between words where the new knowledge is accessible in order for students to apply their knowledge in new contexts (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986).

Vocabulary knowledge is important because it is related to reading comprehension. A large factor in text comprehension is being able to understand the meaning of the vocabulary in the text. To prepare readers to comprehend vocabulary in text, in-depth vocabulary instruction can help. Most vocabulary instruction is inadequate to reach the goal of preparing readers to comprehend texts (Nagy, 1988) because it lacks instruction aimed at attaining deep word knowledge. The teacher has an important role in creating a classroom environment that provides multiple exposures to words in a variety of contexts to allow students the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of how to produce a new vocabulary word.

#### ELL Vocabulary Development

There exists a relationship between words in a learner's first language (L1) and a learner's second language (L2). When learning a second language the L1 helps learners make connections between new vocabulary and their current vocabulary. The L1 can determine if words in the L2 are learned easily or not and if new knowledge systems need to be mastered (such as new alphabets, new sounds, or new syntactic notions like phrasal verbs or articles) (Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997). The initial mapping of a new L2 word will most likely consist of re-labeling an L1 word rather than creating an entire new conceptual unit when the L1 and L2 are similar or not.

The National Reading Panel (2000) made a connection between a learner's oral vocabulary and reading vocabulary. As a learner begins to read, new words encountered

while reading are mapped into the oral vocabulary the learner possesses. If a word is not present in a learner's oral vocabulary, the word will not be understood well. Oral vocabulary is essential in making the transition from oral to reading and writing.

Historically, in-depth vocabulary instruction has been a neglected area in second language classrooms. Interest in second language vocabulary instruction has grown in the past 25 years. Teachers recognize the need for a systematic and principled approach to vocabulary instruction. This interest has led to an increase in research studies centering on vocabulary development in ELLs and many new instructional materials for vocabulary (Decarrico, 2001).

The National Reading Panel (2000) gave new importance to vocabulary instruction by outlining key areas in literacy development which consisted of phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. All of these areas of literacy interact with and depend on each other while a child is learning how to read. The National Reading Panel emphasized the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction and reading of a wide variety of texts to expose learners' to new vocabulary.

Goldenberg (2008) agrees that best practice for teaching ELLs vocabulary consists of explicit instruction and multiple exposures to words in a variety of contexts. He supports using visual representations of vocabulary, not just verbal explanations, performing activities where students are actively involved, and manipulating and analyzing word meanings. Students benefit from instruction in recognizing cognates and teachers providing translations of words in the student's native language.

Hymes (as cited in Decarrico, 2001) placed more importance on sociolinguistic and pragmatic factors in language teaching and learning. Communicative competence, which is the effective use of language for meaningful communication in formal and informal settings, was Hymes' focus. Again, in this approach, vocabulary was given secondary status to support functional language use.

In the past recent decades, vocabulary has been getting more attention in language classrooms. More studies are being conducted on how to teach vocabulary, which words to teach, and the importance of when to begin teaching vocabulary. Computer-aided research has begun to provide large amounts of information for analysis that was not available before the technology age such as how words behave in language use, larger units that function in discourse as single lexical items, and difference between written and spoken communication (Decarrico, 2001). In addition to this research, psycholinguistic studies have revealed mental processes involved in vocabulary learning such as memory, storage, and retrieval. Research began to lead to more studies and interest in how to effectively teach and learn vocabulary.

#### Academic language

Academic language is the combination of vocabulary, grammatical constructions, pragmatics and language functions that students will encounter. These functions are necessary for ELLs to produce English in an academic setting. In order to develop academic language, instruction must focus on meaning, language, and use. Teacher and student interactions must be filled with cognitive challenge, intrinsic motivation, and emphasis on critical literacy (Cummins, 2000).

There are two types of language skills, one used for basic social interactions and one used for academic purposes. Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) are skills for using social English while discussing everyday topics such as meals, weather, or leisure activities (Cummins, 2000). It is not the setting that determines BICS, but rather the type of exchange. For example, BICS is commonly used while having casual conversations on the telephone or during an informal conversation with peers at lunch.

The second type of language skill is Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), which refers to formal language skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing for academic purposes. It can take ELLs anywhere from six-months to three years to develop BICS. This range depends on factors such as age, time in the country, or exposure to English. However, the ability to develop academic English, CALP, can take much longer depending on numerous factors such as prior educational experience in the speakers' native language (L1) or support of L1 while learning a second language (L2). CALP is the language used in content area classes in an academic setting. It is necessary to focus on the academic language needed to develop CALP in order for students to interact with and produce content specific language. In order for teachers to increase the production of academic language in their students, there must be a purposeful choosing of words to teach within academic contexts.

### Tiers of Words to Teach

If poor readers struggle to learn words from context, how does a teacher decide which words to explicitly teach in order to increase her students' vocabulary? Beck, et al. (2002) suggests a method of placing words into three different tiers of relevance to help

decide which words need instructional attention. The first tier of vocabulary is basic words that rarely need instructional attention for native English speakers. Examples of tier one words are *ball, pencil, clock, walk, or pretty*. These words are often described as words used to label objects. Depending on students' level of English, most students' who are learning English need some instruction on tier one words. In my study, tier one words will be incorporated into the instruction of tier two vocabulary. The third tier of words is low frequency words that are content specific to a certain subject. This tier includes words like *isotope, peninsula, or refinery* which are specific to content areas such as math and social studies.

The second tier of words is the most important words to teach because these words will be encountered numerous times across a variety of domains and content areas. Examples include *taller than, disgusting, lonely, or devour*. They will be used in academic conversations and in general reading. These words have a high instructional potential because they will need to be explicitly taught with rich examples of using the words in context. Tier two words can be connected to other words in concepts in meaningful ways. Due to the large role these words have in a student's vocabulary, a rich background and understanding of tier two words can have a great influence on a student's academic language use (Beck et al. 2002). My study will include target vocabulary that includes tier two words because these words raise the academic language level and allow students to use tier two vocabulary to discuss tier one words.

Heibert (2005) urges teachers to choose vocabulary words carefully from a text for their students by asking three questions. First, which unknown words might students

know by association with known words? There are many words that students possess a concept for in their schema (Graves, 1984). The student may not have a particular label for the word; hence, a basic connection can be made to the new vocabulary and the label with the already known concept of the word. The second question teachers must ask when choosing words to teach is: Which words in the text have derivatives that are frequently encountered in the students' reading and writing? For example, the word *cautiously*, is part of a family that has members that can appear in different forms: *cautious*, *caution*, or *cautionary*. The third question to ask is: with which words may a student need support due to multiple meanings of the word? Words should receive attention when the author's use is different than common uses. By using Hiebert's three questions teachers can make educational decisions about vocabulary instruction that meets the unique needs of their students. Heibert (2005) also suggests that too much time is spent on literary words for example helter-skelter, bonanza, or prima donna. Teachers must keep in mind that choosing words to teach must include words that are broad and can be applied to multiple contexts.

### Teaching Vocabulary

This section will begin by examining the benefits of explicit vocabulary instruction. It will investigate the importance of activating prior knowledge when teaching vocabulary and the robust vocabulary instruction model created by Beck et al. (2002). It continues with an overview of implicit vocabulary learning by using read alouds to provide a rich vocabulary environment.

### Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

Most studies pertaining to vocabulary development are conducted with students in third grade and beyond; there is a smaller range of classroom studies focusing on vocabulary instruction during the primary years. Research has shown that native English speakers benefit from explicit and implicit vocabulary instruction (Biemiller 2004). Many native English speakers have a vocabulary large enough to read a wide variety of texts and learn words incidentally. Yet, many ELLs struggle to gain vocabulary incidentally through independent reading due to a smaller range of words and less depth of word knowledge.

In Biemiller's (2004) study of whole class vocabulary instruction with ELLs and native English speakers in grades kindergarten through grade two resulted in students learning 20-30% of words that were explicitly explained and learning only 5% of words that were not explicitly taught but were present in the read alouds. Biemiller assessed students with a posttest by having students explain the meaning of words in context sentences six weeks after the readings and explicit teaching. Biemiller (2004) reported that when teachers explain words and add daily and weekly review of the words taught, there was an increase in the words learned by 35%. This research suggests that using explicit vocabulary instruction with ELLs to give multiple encounters with words may provide deep word knowledge.

Beck et al. (1982) designed a vocabulary intervention based on 12 week cycles with fourth grade students. During each cycle, a new category of words was presented. Assessment of the intervention included an experimental test of vocabulary knowledge,

semantic decision-making, sentence verification, story recall, and a reading section of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). Beck, et al. concluded that participants process word meanings more accurately and more rapidly due to instruction. Students showed growth in story comprehension, because individual word meanings were understood. Interestingly, students could transfer word learning to define and comprehend untaught words in assessments.

A debate exists about using explicit or implicit vocabulary instruction for ELLs. The communicative approach found its way to supporting implicit vocabulary instruction known as incidental word learning. In this method, students were encouraged to examine text for clues to infer definitions of unknown words while reading (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Researchers agree that implicit word learning is important, but it is equally important to have a balanced approach to word learning while placing emphasis on explicit instruction to directly teach vocabulary. According to Sokmen (1997), explicit vocabulary instruction has several key characteristics:

- Building a large recognition vocabulary
- Integrating new words with already learned words
- Providing multiple exposures to words
- Providing a deep level of word knowledge
- Using imaging in word learning
- Using multiple techniques to teach vocabulary
- Encouraging independent learning strategies

These traits can assist teachers in planning and implementing curriculum to meet instructional goals and standards for ELLs.

### Prior Knowledge

Language input is a key indicator of how quickly a child acquires vocabulary (Hart & Risley, 1995; Biemiller, 2004). Children in households and classroom settings who hear more words over a period of time increase their vocabularies. Children need multiple exposures to a word to learn it, yet as children's vocabulary develop, it takes fewer exposures to amplify vocabulary (Temple & Snow, 2003). For example, a child who knows the names of 15 different dinosaurs can more easily learn a new dinosaur name than a child who does not know any dinosaur names. This addition of new knowledge is primarily due to having the ability to build upon existing knowledge. The background knowledge in comprehending language is known as schema theory. This previous knowledge is called the reader's background knowledge, and the previously acquired knowledge structures are called schemata (Bartlett, 1932). Schema refers to an active organization of past reactions and experiences that are linked to other similar experiences (Bartlett, 1932).

Schema is defined in a very basic sense as everything a person knows, from the places one has been to the books one has read. Everything one has experienced is a part of a person's schema (Miller, 2002). Schema theory is how our understanding of the world is organized into patterns that are connected, based on our prior experiences and knowledge (Gibbons, 2002). Schema aids in the reading process by helping readers relate the text to their lives which helps increase reading comprehension. When a student does

not have the schema for a particular topic or text, it becomes difficult to relate the new knowledge to existing knowledge. A teacher must scaffold the new information by using language and examples that the student can relate to and gain meaning from.

### Robust Vocabulary Instruction

There is a significant need for vocabulary instruction to have a higher importance in today's educational system. To address this issue by increasing the efficiency of vocabulary instruction, research suggests that teachers' adopt a robust vocabulary program that is two-fold: one that directly teaches new vocabulary and one that extends students' knowledge of the words by applying the words to new contexts. For the purpose of this study, robust vocabulary instruction will be defined as that which directly explains the meanings of words in student-friendly language, giving multiple examples and contexts, and requiring students to process words deeply by identifying and explaining appropriate and inappropriate uses and situations and creating multiple contexts along with thought-provoking, playful, and interactive follow-up (Beck, et. al, 2002; Beck & McKeown, 2007).

Numerous studies indicate that robust vocabulary instruction is highly effective for native English speakers in terms of increasing vocabulary and reading comprehension (Beck, Perfetti & McKeown, 1982; McKeown, Beck, Omanson & Perfetti, 1983; McKeown, Beck, Omanson & Pople, 1985). Yet, few studies in the field of second language acquisition have been done to support that this method of robust vocabulary instruction is effective with ELLs.

## Read Alouds

Children, especially pre-readers, acquire new words from verbal contexts such as listening to oral stories or conversations, watching television, interaction with other children or adults (Nagy, 1988). When children become higher level readers, vocabulary acquisition shifts from developing vocabulary through oral contexts to acquiring vocabulary from written contexts. Kindergarten students begin independently reading books that are repetitive, contain high-frequency words, and are designed for students to use picture cues to figure out unknown words.

For example, a level A or level B book according to the Fountas and Pinnell book leveling system would be an appropriate book for independent reading in kindergarten. A book of this nature contains repetitive language such as, “Mom is running. Mom is jumping. Mom is painting.” The words *mom* and *is*, in this example, would be high frequency words that are taught in the classroom. The picture cues would lead the student to read the unknown words *running*, *jumping*, and *painting*. These words are increasing students’ reading vocabulary, but these words are already a part of students’ oral productive vocabulary. A native English speaker in kindergarten understands the word *running* when it is used in an oral context; however, when the word *running* is written the student may not be able to read the word because it is not automatically recognized in a students’ reading vocabulary.

Books at a kindergarten independent reading level are written contexts that contain mostly tier one words because the books contain high frequency words. If the goal of instruction is to teach tier two vocabulary words to kindergarten students, they

will hear tier two words in teacher read alouds and in oral conversations, not in written contexts at kindergarten students' reading level. The main way for young nonreaders to be exposed to new vocabulary is within the context of oral language experiences such as read alouds (Biemiller, 2004). The importance of read alouds is imperative in order to give kindergarten students exposure to tier two vocabulary words in oral contexts.

A recent study by Penno, Wilkinson, & Moore (2002) examined the effects of repeated exposure to stories on incidental learning from verbal contexts and the effects of explaining the meaning of the target words, which the researchers found contributed significantly to vocabulary growth. The study consisted of forty-seven students from New Zealand in the five to eight year old age range who spoke English as a first language. The subjects listened to two stories read to them on three occasions, each one week apart. The students could see the words in the text, but the words were not written separately for students to see. Target vocabulary and ways to assess non-target (generalization) words were chosen. A pre and posttest multiple choice vocabulary measure was used to examine vocabulary gains. The assessment included a reading-retelling task to measure students' knowledge of target words.

The study concluded that using read alouds alone without additional attention to words had unimpressive results (Penno, Wilkinson, & Moore, 2002). Students made significant gains from pre- to posttest; notably, students who received explicit instruction on target words scored higher than students who did not. Higher ability students made greater gains on the pre- to posttest and the repeated readings and retellings than did the lower ability students. Age was also a factor: the older students more accurately used the

non-target words that were learned incidentally through repeated readings than the younger students did. The findings have implications for the classroom, in that primary grade students can learn vocabulary from listening to stories, and the vocabulary learning can be further enhanced by repeated readings and teacher explanations of difficult vocabulary.

Elley (1989) conducted a study with similar results. His study focused on read alouds in New Zealand elementary schools with English speakers. Pre and posttests were administered to show vocabulary growth. In the first study, seven classes of seven year old students showed a vocabulary gain of 15% from one story without direct explanation of target vocabulary. The second study, three classes of eight year olds showed a 15% increase in vocabulary with no teacher explanation of target vocabulary and three classes who received direct explanation of vocabulary had gains of 40% on the vocabulary measure. The results show that read alouds contribute significantly to vocabulary acquisition and direct instruction of vocabulary can more than double such vocabulary gains. Follow up tests revealed that incidental vocabulary gains were relatively permanent and children who start out with less vocabulary knowledge gain at least as much from the readings as children with higher vocabulary knowledge.

Another study supporting direct vocabulary instruction was conducted by Coyne et al., (2004), who created a year-long storybook intervention for native English speaking kindergarten children who were at risk of reading difficulties based on their performance on letter naming and phonological awareness tasks. The intervention incorporated 108 half-hour lessons to accompany 40 children's storybooks. The lessons consisted of

explicit vocabulary instruction within shared storybook reading experiences. The results indicated that students with lower receptive vocabulary skills demonstrated greater gains in explicitly taught vocabulary than students with higher vocabulary skills. Storybook reading with emphasis on direct vocabulary instruction of words encountered in the story helped to narrow the gap between students with high and low vocabularies. The analysis of the results suggested that read aloud activities that emphasize incidental vocabulary learning did nothing to decrease the gap between students with higher and lower vocabulary skills.

The results of this study support an optimistic view for improving early vocabulary intervention for children in primary grades who are at risk of reading difficulties due to under-developed vocabularies. Explicit vocabulary instruction that draws attention to target words within the context of a read aloud may also assist young readers in becoming more aware of new words and word meanings. This enhanced awareness of words may increase the chances of students learning words independently and incidentally through paying closer attention to words and their use in certain contexts (Beck et al., 1982).

To increase the results of using read alouds, researchers combined the instructional techniques of read alouds, direct vocabulary explanations as the story was read, and repeated readings of stories (Penno et al., 2002; Elley, 1989). These techniques were proven to be effective for native English speakers. Follow-up vocabulary activities such as direct vocabulary instruction also showed positive results in acquiring vocabulary (Coyne et al., 2004).

A recent study by Silverman (2007a) compared three methods of vocabulary instruction: contextual, analytical, and anchored, during read alouds in an ELL kindergarten classroom. Contextual instruction focuses on connecting words to their use in books and to children's prior experiences. Analytical instruction enhances contextual instruction with semantic analysis of words in different contexts. Anchored instruction includes attention to spoken and written forms of words. Each method was implemented by kindergarten teachers in two of six kindergarten classrooms from two schools over the period of six weeks. One third of the students were from a low SES home and one third of the students were ELLs. The first study compared the effects of the three different methods of vocabulary instruction on the learning of new vocabulary at the end of the intervention. The second study examined the long-term effects of instruction six months later when the participants were in first grade. The students' vocabulary was assessed by a researcher-developed picture and oral vocabulary measure.

The first study concluded that the anchored and analytical methods of instruction were significantly more effective than contextual methods. These two methods showed greater results on tests of students' picture vocabulary and oral vocabulary. Students in the anchored and analytical condition learned an average of 7.7 and 6.9 words throughout the intervention, whereas, students in the contextual condition learned only 2.2 words out of 30 during the intervention (Silverman 2007a).

The second part of the study by Silverman (2007a) concluded six months following the intervention when the students were in first grade. Only 50 of the original 94 participants were in the school the following year, a fact related to the high degree of

student transience in the district. The same tests that were used in the first study were re-administered to the students in the second study. The findings showed that ELLs in the analytical condition outperformed those in the anchored and contextual conditions. This finding indicates that teachers should be teaching sophisticated words by using activities that allow students to analyze and use the target words in a variety of contexts.

Additionally, teachers can maximize instruction time by simultaneously teaching decoding skills and vocabulary during storybook reading time.

In addition to read alouds being an effective tool to teach vocabulary to ELLs, Silverman (2007b) found positive results for ELLs in learning vocabulary. She investigated how ELL kindergarten students learn words that are explicitly taught during read-alouds. The intervention integrated the following components of vocabulary instruction: introduction of words through the rich context of children's literature, student-friendly definitions, questions to guide students to think more deeply about the target words, examples of how to use the words in multiple contexts, act out meanings of words, visual aids, pronouncing the target words, notice the spelling of the words, comparing and contrasting words, and multiple exposures to the target words. The students' vocabulary knowledge was measured by using the Test of Language Development (TOLD) and a Researcher Vocabulary Assessment. Her findings showed ELLs learned target words at the same rate and grew in general vocabulary at a faster rate than their English-Only (EO) peers. Both the EOs and ELLs increased their target word knowledge from pretest to posttest: EOs learned an average of 14 target words and ELLs

learned an average of 20 words. This research supports that if teaching methods are appropriate for ELLs, they can learn what is explicitly taught as easily as EOs.

There are different ways to teach vocabulary to support the productive vocabulary of kindergarten ELLs. Using what is known about vocabulary development, academic vocabulary, explicit and implicit learning, effective teaching strategies, and the use of read alouds in vocabulary instruction, I intend to use the research to compile an instructional approach to explicitly teach vocabulary using read alouds and the model presented by Beck et al., (2002) that supports vocabulary production in kindergarten ELLs.

### Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the issues surrounding vocabulary development, academic vocabulary, and teaching vocabulary. Vocabulary impacts reading comprehension, oral language, and academic success in general. Many ELLs are at risk for low vocabularies due to some ELL families possibly living in low SES homes and lacking experience with English. Vocabulary is more than the number of words in a learner's lexicon; it is depth of word knowledge and the ability to produce vocabulary in discourse. ELLs benefit from rich input through explicit instruction of vocabulary words, vocabulary extension activities, and from the rich language of read alouds. The goal is for the ELL to internalize the language input and to have opportunities for meaningful and relevant output. The next chapter will describe the methods for this study.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to increase student target vocabulary production by creating a vocabulary-focused classroom environment through merging read alouds, direct vocabulary instruction, and vocabulary extension activities. In this study, I want to know if vocabulary instruction will increase students' use of target vocabulary words.

1. Does Beck, McKeown, and Kucan's (2002) vocabulary model work with ESL kindergarten students?
2. As a result of implementing this vocabulary model, do ESL kindergarten students use target vocabulary?

I explored how vocabulary activities, read alouds, and writing activities contributed to a classroom environment centered on vocabulary development and how that environment increased a student's vocabulary.

### Overview

The methods chapter begins by describing the action research methodology used in this study, including participants, setting, data collection techniques, and procedures for instruction. The procedures that were unified in all four action research cycles are described first. Later, each of the four action research cycles are depicted by examining the focus for the cycle, an explanation of choosing read alouds, rationale for word choice,

and a description of the authentic assessment. Verification of the data follows as well as ethical considerations during the data collection process.

### Research Design

A main characteristic of qualitative research is that it can reveal how all of the parts work together to form a whole (Merriam, 1998). By using a variety of methods to collect data, qualitative research can provide deep, descriptive ways to interpret phenomena. To study the question, a qualitative method, action research was used to provide possible solutions in my classroom.

Action research best describes my research methods. According to Nunan (1993), action research is an inside out form of professional development because the teacher is at the heart of the research, reflecting on her own concerns and issues within the classroom, creating her own question for inquiry, and carrying out her own process of data collection to find the results of the question. Nunan characterizes action research as having three main characteristics: It is performed by teachers, it is collaborative, and it is aimed at changing things.

#### Steps in action research

Action research begins by the teacher identifying a problem that is occurring in the classroom. In my action research, this step identifies the problem of producing vocabulary. Does target vocabulary instruction increase ESL kindergarten students use of vocabulary? The second step is the collection of baseline data to identify what is happening in the classroom without changing anything. This is how I came to be interested in vocabulary development. Last school year, I realized that my students were

not regularly producing academic vocabulary. The next step is an intervention or a modification of existing teaching practices. Included in this change is a method to evaluate the effects of the change through data collection. In my research, I am using a variety of data collection techniques: daily teacher observation journal, checklists, and authentic assessments at the end of each action research cycle. The last step is to report on the finding from the intervention and planning further action research cycles. In my investigation, I use reflective practice to identify growth in the use of target vocabulary words, look for patterns in teacher's observation journal, interpret information from the checklists, and examine authentic assessments over the course of four different action research cycles.

In order to successfully use the daily teacher's observation journal as a data collection technique, I implement the concept of reflective practice as a daily tool to think critically about my teaching and about student learning. "Reflective practice is a deliberate pause to assume an open perspective to allow for higher-level thinking processes" (York-Barr, Sommers, Ghore, Montie, 2001, p.6). A deliberate pause is a purposeful slowing down to find an open perspective. The goal is to be open-minded and to be open to other points of view with the data that is collected. Reflection involves processing thoughts in an active and conscious manner. Reflective practice may involve thinking processes such as inquiry, metacognition, analysis, or synthesis. Reflective practice is successful when deepened understandings lead to action (York-Barr et al., 2001).

## Participants

Participants in the study include 14 kindergarten ELLs from four different mainstream classrooms. All of the participants were born in the United States. There are nine native Spanish speakers, two Somali speakers, one Tibetan speaker, one Hmong speaker, and one Amharic speaker. Each student is given a Home Language Questionnaire (HLQ) upon registration to the school district. The purpose of the HLQ is to determine if a student needs to be tested for ESL services. The HLQ gives pertinent information about the students' native language, such as languages that are spoken in the home, which language the child learned first, and which language the child mainly speaks at home.

Table 3.1

### *Study Participants*

Participant Pseudonym	Country of Origin	Native Language
Brandon	U.S.	Spanish
Sia Mee	U.S.	Hmong
Abdi	U.S.	Somali
Jamma	U.S.	Tibetan
Diega	U.S.	Spanish
Urbano	U.S.	Spanish
Belicia	U.S.	Spanish
Carmen	U.S.	Spanish
Edwardo	U.S.	Spanish
Kristina	U.S.	Spanish
Jose	U.S.	Spanish
Yago	U.S.	Spanish
Sabra	U.S.	Amharic
Hakim	U.S.	Somali

The study consists of 11 participants that have a level 1 oral language level and three participants are labeled as level 2 ELLs according to results on the PreLas exam (Duncan & DeAvila, 1998) given in September. To ensure privacy of the participants, their work is coded with an assigned pseudonym in order to remain anonymous to outside readers. Every child in kindergarten with a language other than English at home is given the PreLas exam. The PreLas is a standardized language test that assesses oral language and literacy for students ages four-six-years-old who are learning English as a second language. The PreLas is an important test because it is used to determine which students qualify for the KLDM program. Typically only level 1 ELLs are accepted into the KLDM program, but this school year there was such a low number of level 1 students that I was able to accept three ELLs who tested as a level 2.

A student with an oral proficiency of level 1 ranges from having no English to having a minimal amount of understanding. This type of student typically has understanding of basic vocabulary and simple grammatical structures; they can share personal needs and tell about their personal experience. A student with a level 2 oral proficiency shows difficulty following grade level content vocabulary. The student needs constant rephrasing and repetition of academic discourse. This type of student can understand social conversations, but may need modifications such as being spoken to slowly and using repetition. A level 2 speaker is usually hesitant to participate and will give one to two word responses. They have a limited English vocabulary and will make many errors in English grammar and syntax. They may restrict speech to basic patterns.

Both level 1 and level 2 ELLs are considered beginners in the language learning process (Duncan & DeAvila, 1998).

According to the Minnesota Department of Education (2005), a beginning ELL derives a great deal of meaning from the context and nonverbal cues that accompany any English input, and benefits from repetition, rephrasing, and a slower rate of speech. Errors are expected, frequent, and characteristic of language production at this stage. These students benefit from scaffolding academic content that is age appropriate.

### Site

#### Research Site

The setting of this study is in an urban K-5 elementary school in a first ring suburb of a metropolitan area in the upper Midwest. The school contains 485 students. The population of ELLs has risen steadily since 2000 to presently include 42% of the school population. 50% of the kindergarten class is ELLs. The ELLs at this school come from a variety of linguistic backgrounds including Spanish, Somali, Tibetan, Arabic, Amharic, Hmong, Hindi, Urdu, Bosnian, and Oromo. 70% of the total school population and 100% of the participants in this study qualify for free and reduced lunch. The school has a high transient population, which means that many students stay for one year or less. The school is considered a Title 1 school, which allows federal grant money to schools with greater than 40% of student families living in poverty (U.S. Department of Education, Title 1, Part A Program, 2008).

## Research Setting

All day, every day kindergarten is the school district's kindergarten program model. Kindergarten ESL instruction at the teaching site is split into two equal parts. The morning consists of team teaching with the ESL teacher and mainstream teachers during reader's workshop in a collaborative inclusion model. In order to collaborate, the two teachers plan instruction, co-teach the lessons, and analyze assessments together. The afternoon consists of a program titled Kindergarten Language Development Model (KLDM), a model which provides additional instruction for ELLs who possess the highest language need. It is a half-day program in which students' access intensive language through content classes in a separate kindergarten classroom. It extends the kindergarten curriculum where the ESL teacher pre-teaches, teaches, and re-teaches material. The research will take place in the afternoon in the KLDM classroom. The read alouds and vocabulary instruction will be taught as a whole group activity.

## Procedure for Instruction

The data is collected in four action research cycles from October through January. Cycles 1, 2, and 3 consist of 15 school days. The 15 day cycle contains read alouds, direct vocabulary instruction, vocabulary extension activities, review of the target vocabulary words and includes one day for authentic assessment of the target words. Brief explanations of the selected vocabulary words with student-friendly definitions are given. The data that is collected is examined to make any adjustments before beginning the next action research cycle. The fourth action research cycle consists of five days and

focuses on explicit instruction and vocabulary activities to teach comparatives and superlatives.

### Explicit Instruction Steps

In all four cycles, I provide explicit instruction of the target vocabulary words by following the model provided by Beck et al. (2002) as explained below.

1. The word is used in the context of the story. For example, in the book *Who Took the Cookies From the Cookie Jar*, the animals thought the cookies tasted *delicious*.
2. Students repeat the word to understand the phonological representation of the word. For example, the teacher asks the students to say the word with her.
3. The student-friendly definition is explained. For example, *delicious* means that something tastes yummy.
4. The teacher provides examples of the word used in different contexts other than the way it was used in the story. For example, the dessert I ate yesterday was *delicious* or a giraffe would think that leaves are *delicious*.
5. Students provide their own examples. For example, tell about something you ate that was *delicious*.
6. Students say the word again.

These six stages for explicit vocabulary instruction are repeated for each new word and the process is used to review target vocabulary words.

### Vocabulary Instruction During Read Alouds

Read alouds play a key role in a kindergarten classroom to introduce students to new vocabulary words. If a definition of a word is imperative to understand a story the teacher must be the judge of when and how to give a brief explanation of the words within the context of the story or to wait to give the definition during vocabulary activity time after the story has been read (Beck et al., 2002). While reading a text aloud, giving a large, elaborate explanation of a new vocabulary word can distract young readers from the meaning of the story, whereas a brief explanation allows for student comprehension of the story.

### Classroom Environment

A classroom environment focused on vocabulary is essential to building a community of learners who produce new target vocabulary words. In order to create a rich verbal environment, students will need to be shown the importance of paying attention to words (Beck et al., 2002). Creating a vocabulary rich environment can take many forms. Students will be encouraged to use the target vocabulary words during classroom meetings where students share something about their lives. For example, students may share something they saw on the field trip that was *tiny*. Students will receive praise for producing the target vocabulary words.

Another example of creating a vocabulary-rich environment is to allow students opportunities to share when they notice words that are learned inside of school in a context outside of the KLDM classroom. Each day at the afternoon meeting students become Word Wizards, encouraged to share experiences with the target words in their

lives; these may include events in school or outside of the KLDM classroom. For example, a student could share that he ate pepperoni pizza for lunch today and it was *delicious*. The Word Wizard sharing activity encourages students to think about, observe, and use the words in more contexts than only the KLDM classroom.

### Reader's Notebook

The students have an opportunity to glue the pre-printed vocabulary words presented that day in their reader's notebook. The purpose of the reader's notebook is to give students another encounter with a vocabulary word and to provide an additional occasion to produce the word. An example is to ask students to draw a picture showing a time when he/she was *surprised*. After students are finished with the extension activity in their reader's notebook, students share their ideas with a learning partner in order to practice producing the target vocabulary and asking questions about their partner's ideas.

### Interesting Word Wall

A vocabulary word wall, called the interesting word wall, is displayed on a bulletin board in the classroom where each new vocabulary word is placed followed by a student-friendly definition. The student-friendly definition is created by the teacher, but the students partake in the process by physically writing the definition for the interesting word wall. The class will do this by using interactive writing, in which students take turns writing one letter on a sentence strip in order to produce the student-friendly definition. The students see their writing on the interesting word wall, rather than the teacher's writing.

A visual representation of the word is placed next to the word and the student-friendly definition. Many of the pictures are actual photographs of the students acting out the word. For example, the word *devour* is represented by a photo of a student eating her lunch in the school cafeteria.

### Vocabulary Activities

To extend students' learning and processing of vocabulary words, the students partake in a variety of vocabulary activities. The activities explained in this section take part in all four cycles. If an activity only takes place during certain cycles and not all cycles, it is further discussed in the action research cycle section later in this chapter. Students partake in a variety of language rich vocabulary activities as presented in Beck, et al. (2002).

Some of the activities include:

- *Have you ever...?* In this activity, students are asked to relate the target word to their schema. (Describe a time when you felt *jealous*).
- *Word associations*- Students are asked to choose a word from a list that is associated with the target word. (Which word goes with not being able to see something anymore)? (*vanish*)

Throughout the four cycles, tier one words are taught in the process of teaching the target vocabulary. Since the students are level one and level two ELLs, it is important to raise the academic rigor by teaching students target vocabulary, but also to teach basic tier one vocabulary simultaneously. For example, in cycle one students sorted fruits and

vegetables to describe which were *delicious* and *disgusting*. It was an opportunity to partake in an oral language activity in a meaningful context.

In each cycle, students create classroom books centered on the target vocabulary. Each student has a page in the book with a photograph of the student depicting the definition of the word. For example in cycle one, the class created a delicious and disgusting book. Each student takes a picture with an expression on his or her face as if something delicious or disgusting was eaten. The picture and a student response are placed on their page in the book. All of the student pages are bound together to create a classroom book that is placed in the classroom library.

### Choosing Texts

Multiple factors are considered while choosing texts to read aloud to the students. I examine the content of the book for students' ease at connecting the book to their own background experiences and prior knowledge. Rich, colorful illustrations and text is a key ingredient to hold students' interests while reading aloud. The amount of text is critical for low proficiency ESL kindergarten students' attention span and comprehension.

Most importantly, I examine the type of target words that are in the book, to monitor whether or not the words can be used by students in a variety of contexts. If the text does not contain enough target words, I can select words whose concepts match the content of the story even though the words do not appear (Beck et al., 2002). For example, the story *Five Green and Speckled Frogs* does not contain the word *disgusting*, but the content of the story provides an opportunity to discuss that if a person ate a fly it would taste *disgusting*, not *delicious*, as it would taste to a frog. To focus on student

vocabulary, read alouds need to have a variety of target words or opportunities for target words to be used to describe the content of the text. After completing the read alouds and direct vocabulary instruction, there are three data collection techniques to assess if the instruction is successful.

#### Data Collection Technique One: Teacher Observation Journal

The teacher observation journal is an assessment tool that allows the researcher to reflect on her own teaching and to take an insider's perspective to indicate the benefits of the instruction and areas that need to be modified. The journal is used at the end of each school day after the students have left the classroom. This tool is suitable for this research because it allows an insider's perspective where the researcher can document notes of positive changes, indicate if there is no change, or document interruptions that could change the results of the study. The journal is used to document the researcher's reactions to instruction, students' reaction to texts, instruction, and activities and observations while implementing the text *Bringing Words to Life* by Beck et al., (2002) in instruction. I document the use of the vocabulary instruction model and discuss the processes of focusing so much time and energy on vocabulary.

#### Data Collection Technique Two: Checklist

The purpose of the checklist is to have an efficient way to record data during the vocabulary lesson and the student work time. As a kindergarten teacher, I can only allow one-two minutes to write a few notes while I have students in my classroom. Realizing the time constraints of a kindergarten classroom, I created a checklist that records student production of vocabulary words by placing a tally mark next to the student's name and

under the target word that was produced by that student, as Table 3.2 shows. To be realistic in tracking student production of vocabulary words, I track only five students per day. Each day I rotate the five students I observe, so that I am able to record data on each of the 14 students in the study. This allows me to track student progress and address areas that need to change for the next action research cycle.

Table 3.2

Example of a Checklist

Names	Words		
	delicious	devour	disgusting
Sabra			
Edwardo			
Belicia			
Abdi			
Kristina			

Data Collection Technique Three: Authentic Assessments

Authentic assessment is assessment that is based on a child's performance over a period of time. The purpose of authentic assessments is to inform instruction and to make modifications if needed. There are many benefits to using authentic assessment. It allows the teacher to adapt the assessment to fit the needs of the students with the content that was taught. It gives a fuller and fairer account of what a child has experienced and learned than a standardized test can provide. Authentic assessment offers a continuous record of goals that the student has accomplished (Law & Eckes, 1995).

At the end of each action research cycle, students take part in an activity to assess their progress in understanding and producing the target vocabulary words. The

assessment is given individually, as I record student responses. Each assessment aligns with the focus of that particular cycle by incorporating the texts and opportunities to produce the target words that were chosen for that cycle. The specifics of the authentic assessments are further discussed in this chapter in the section about differences in each action research cycle.

### Data Analysis

Since data is collected using different techniques, data analysis takes a variety of forms. This section explains the different ways the three data collection techniques of the teacher observation journal, checklists, and authentic assessments, are examined. Each of the three data collection techniques are examined for patterns in student production and connections between the teacher observation journal, student production on the checklists, and the result of production of target vocabulary words during the authentic assessments.

#### Teacher Observation Journal

The teacher observation journal is examined to determine patterns in students' behavior during vocabulary activities and instruction. I look at how students responded to activities, read alouds, and target vocabulary words. The journal consists of examples of students using the target vocabulary words in a variety of contexts. I examine which words the students used and how they were used. I study how I reflected on and changed activities to meet the needs of the students.

### Checklists

The daily checklists are analyzed for student growth and mastery of vocabulary concepts. I examine how many days it takes students to become comfortable with the meaning of a word in order to produce the word in spoken language. I also analyze how frequently students use the vocabulary on the day it is introduced and focused upon.

### Authentic Assessments

The authentic assessments are examined in two forms. First, students' explanation of their work and the production of target vocabulary words are assessed. Secondly, the correct usage of the word is assessed. Each authentic assessment at the end of the cycle is different because it matches the target words, the read alouds, and the focus of the cycle. As a result, each assessment looks different and is examined in different manners.

### Action Research Cycles

In this section, the four action research cycles are explained in more detail. Each cycle explains the focus, the types of texts and rationale for choosing them, the reasons for choosing certain target words, and a description of the unique authentic assessment used at the end the cycle. Table 3.3, presents the read alouds and the target vocabulary for cycles one, two, three, and four.

### Cycle 1

The focus of cycle one is to create a classroom environment where the model of Beck et al. (2002) for teaching vocabulary begins. The students are introduced to the pattern for introducing new vocabulary, the interesting word wall, and the idea of becoming Word Wizards who use the new target vocabulary words in their spoken

language. The students are introduced to the data collection technique of the checklist.

The students see that each time they produce a target word, I record their attempt.

Table 3.3

*List of Texts and Target Vocabulary Words*

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<u>Book Title</u>	<u>Target Vocabulary</u>
Cycle 1: Repetitive Texts	
Who Took the Cookies From the Cookie Jar?	delicious, tiny, devour
5 Green and Speckled Frogs	disgusting
5 Little Pumpkins	first, second, third, fourth fifth
Cycle 2: Non-fiction Texts	
Animals Animals	smaller, larger
Animal Facts	rough, smooth
Animal Survival	sharp
Animals Two by Two	same, different
A Frog has a Sticky Tongue	slimy
Cycle 3: Fiction Texts	
Frog in the Middle	jealous, surprise, present
The Gingerbread Girl	lonely, chuckle, amazing, peek, devious
Cycle 4: Comparatives and Superlatives	
	taller than, smaller than the tallest, the smallest

I choose texts that are appropriate for this time of the school year that serve a variety of instructional goals. The texts for this cycle are *Who Took the Cookies from the*

*Cookie Jar?*, *Five Green and Speckled Frogs*, and *Five Little Pumpkins*. First, the texts are repetitive texts, which meets the language needs of the ELLs at this point in the school year. The students' language levels are low level 1, which indicate that they have difficulty understanding spoken English, and depending on the individual student, will only produce one word responses or short phrases.

Second, these texts give students confidence in their language abilities; additionally, the rhythmic poems and songs gives students opportunities to join other students to produce language as a whole class. This lowers the affective filter by making the content more accessible, and it creates a low anxiety environment in order to produce language. Third, the texts match the kindergarten curriculum when the data collection is taking place in October. KLDM offers students opportunities to extend their learning from the mainstream classroom; therefore, the more KLDM can pre-teach, teach, and re-teach the content and language from the mainstream classroom, the more language practice the students gain.

The target words were carefully chosen with a purpose in mind. The target words *delicious*, *disgusting*, and *devour* were appropriate because students are motivated to use these words while discussing food and other things that could look, taste, or smell *disgusting* and *delicious*. The word *tiny* was appropriate because it could be used in a variety of contexts to describe the size of an object. Ordinal numbers were chosen due to their use in a variety of content areas such as reading, writing, math, and science. These words are important to a student's academic vocabulary and provide a multitude of opportunities for production.

Students have opportunities to extend their practice with new vocabulary words through classroom activities. Students may act out the word while classmates try to guess which word it is. The students illustrate their own pictures of a word to create a classroom chart describing a word. For example, the students draw an item that is *delicious* and one that is *disgusting*. The students glue the illustration to a two-column chart that describes what KLDM thinks is *delicious* and *disgusting*, and the chart is placed in the classroom.

At the end of the first cycle a two-part authentic assessment takes place. During this first assessment, students are given a T-chart to differentiate between things that are *delicious* and things that are *disgusting*. Students are able to draw on both sides of the T-chart three things that are *disgusting* and three things that are *delicious*. They orally describe the items they chose that are delicious and disgusting. The second part of the authentic assessment gives students an opportunity to use the ordinal words. The students are shown a photo of five of their KLDM classmates standing in a line. The students are asked to produce the ordinal words to explain who is *first, second, third, fourth, and fifth*.

## Cycle 2

The focus for the second cycle is whether or not the model by Beck et al. (2002) is successful with non-fiction texts. In this cycle, students are learning vocabulary simultaneously with science content. After reading non-fiction texts and participating in vocabulary instruction, students have the opportunity to produce the vocabulary while performing hands-on science investigations with animals. The animals in the classroom

include goldfish, guppies, water snails, red worms, night crawlers, pill bugs and sow bugs.

The texts for the non-fiction cycle are part of the science curriculum and contain large photographs of animals that will be investigated and photographs of a variety of other animals. Many of the words for this cycle are found in the texts, or the concept of the word is presented in the text. The words are chosen based on the images in the text and opportunities for the students to use the words while investigating the animals. The words are descriptive words that can be used in numerous academic situations.

During the authentic assessment for the second cycle, the students are given a variety of objects from the science unit and asked to orally describe the objects, using the target vocabulary. For example, students describe the different types of shells that they see as *smooth* and *rough*, find two shells that are the *same* or *different*, and explain which shells are *sharp*. The second part of the authentic assessment consists of an open ended verbal activity. The worms from the science investigation are placed on the table and the students are asked to use the target vocabulary to describe the worms. I write each student's response in order to later examine which target vocabulary was produced.

### Cycle 3

The third cycle focuses on pre-teaching vocabulary to help students comprehend the fiction texts. The fiction texts contain more language and more target vocabulary words within the texts. As the months of the school year progress, the students' language skills increase; therefore, there is a call to increase language in order to continue to challenge students' academic language. During cycle one and two, the vocabulary is

taught simultaneously with the story or after the story is read, to give students a context for reference. Cycle three pre-teaches the vocabulary to give students an understanding of words that are necessary for comprehension of the story.

The texts are chosen based on many factors. The text *Frog in the Middle* is about a surprise birthday party which is a part of the students' prior knowledge. It contains familiar themes of friendship and sharing. The target words *jealous, surprise, and present* are imperative to understand the meaning of the story and are academic words that the students can use in many situations.

The text *The Gingerbread Girl* is chosen to coincide with the mainstream kindergarten curriculum during December. I pre-taught the book before it was read in the mainstream classroom. This allowed KLDM students the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the vocabulary and the content of the story in order to be more confident to participate in discussions about the book in the mainstream classroom. The words from the text are chosen because they are important to understand the story and the meaning of the words can be connected to a word that was previously learned.

Additional activities for this cycle include acting out the word and creating classroom books. Students act out one of the vocabulary words and the other students try to guess which word it is. Classroom books are made by taking a picture of students acting out a word and placing that photo on a page for each student. Each student illustrates a page in the book and adds a sentence about the word. For example, the class made a "Book of Surprises" which entails each student illustrating a time they were surprised and the student finished the sentence *I was surprised when...* The student's

photograph with a surprised face is also placed on the page. These activities give students meaningful opportunities to produce the vocabulary words.

The assessment for the third action research cycle provides students the opportunity to retell the story *The Gingerbread Girl* using the text to motivate students to produce language. I document which target words are used and the frequency with which the words are used.

#### Cycle Four

After analyzing the data from cycles one, two, and three, I found that the students need more practice in how to produce comparatives and superlatives. In earlier cycles, students struggled to properly produce the target words *larger* and *smaller*. The last cycle spent five days on explicit instruction of the target words *smaller than*, *taller than*, *the tallest* and *the smallest*. Vocabulary activities included building towers with blocks to determine whose was *the tallest/smallest*, creating a class book of who is *taller than* someone else, and activities where students are able to measure each other to determine who is *taller than/smaller than* other students.

The fourth assessment at the end of the last action research cycle consists of a photograph of five students who are different heights. The students are instructed to orally respond to the picture using words that were taught during the cycle: *smaller than*, *taller than*, *the tallest* or *the smallest*.

#### Verification of Data

Many strategies are used to ensure internal validity for this study. Methodological triangulation is a primary measure for internal validity of the data. This strategy uses

multiple measures to collect data or different methods to collect data (Isaac & Michael, 1981). Triangulation gives the research multiple layers of support and shows the effects of read alouds and vocabulary instruction on students' vocabulary development from multiple perspectives. These perspectives include teacher observation journal, daily checklists, and informal assessments to conclude each cycle.

### Ethics

All aspects of this study focus on the participants' rights. The following protective measures are used in the study: 1) a human subject research proposal is submitted to Hamline University and the school district for approval; 2) parents of the participants are notified about the study; 3) the research objectives are explained to all participants; 4) pseudonyms are used for all participants to protect their identity; 5) all research materials are kept in a secure location at all times, and finally 6) commonly accepted educational practices are used in the study.

### Chapter Summary

Action research is a useful tool for teachers to use in their classrooms to make a positive change in order to solve a problem. Action research requires a focus, a way to collect data, steps to analyze the data, and time spent reflecting on the data to make instructional choices that impact the students. In this study, Beck et al. (2002) model of vocabulary instruction and activities are used in conjunction with read alouds to increase production of students' target vocabulary. This research proceeds through four different action research cycles that focus on these text genres: repetitive texts, non-fiction, and fiction texts. The fourth cycle focuses on re-teaching comparatives and superlatives. The

data collection techniques of a teacher's journal, checklists, and authentic assessments allow the researcher to analyze the data from a variety of perspectives. The next chapter reports the results of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of four action research cycles that examined student production of explicitly taught target vocabulary. These data inform the following questions: 1. Does Beck, McKeown, and Kucan's (2002) vocabulary model work with ESL kindergarten students? 2. As a result of implementing this vocabulary model, do ESL kindergarten students produce target vocabulary? The data are presented sequentially by cycle. Each cycle presents the results of checklist recording student production, teacher observation journals, and authentic assessments collected during each cycle.

Cycle one focused on establishing a vocabulary-rich environment and taught target vocabulary through read alouds that contained repetitive text. The second cycle focused on teaching vocabulary with non-fiction text and hands-on science investigations. The third cycle pre-taught vocabulary from fictional narrative texts. The last cycle taught vocabulary from previous cycles with a focus on using comparatives and superlatives in academic language. The next section presents the results of each action research cycle.

### Cycle One: Establishing a Vocabulary-Rich Environment

Cycle one target vocabulary was chosen from repetitive texts. These texts supported the development of students' oral language proficiency. The target vocabulary

words were chosen based on opportunities to use the words across contexts and content areas. For example, the ordinal numbers could be used in math, science, reading, or writing. Without the understanding of the cycle one target vocabulary, students would not have the language to discuss the order of events or expressive words to converse about food. These words were descriptive words that provided opportunities to use academic English.

### Checklists

The checklist indicates the number of times students produced the target vocabulary words throughout the KLDM time of each action research cycle. The use of target vocabulary was recorded during classroom meeting times, share time, vocabulary instruction time, conversations overheard between students, writing, reading, and conversations with the teacher. The daily total use of target vocabulary is taken from a small group of students, not the entire class. Each day, four to five students' names were on the checklist and the students' names rotated on the checklist each day, so within three days each student in the class was on the checklist.

Table 4.1 contains the target vocabulary from cycle one that was taught over a fifteen day period. Only two to three words were introduced each week; therefore, a dash on the table indicates the target word was not yet introduced. For example, on day one the word *delicious* was introduced and used six times by the students on the checklist and on day eight the word *first* was introduced and was produced five times by the students on the checklist.

Table 4.1

*Cycle 1 Student Production of Target Vocabulary*

Words	Day															Daily Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Delicious	6	4	4	1	7	0	10	5	3	2	5	1	0	10	0	4
Tiny	-	6	0	0	1	0	4	0	4	3	0	1	3	5	4	2.2
Devour	-	-	8	7	5	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	1.8
Disgusting	-	-	-	-	6	4	7	4	0	1	0	0	0	5	4	2.8
First	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	1	0	1	4	0	1	2	1.8
Second	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0	0	1	4	1	1	1.1
Third	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	0	1	2	0	0	0.8
Fourth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	1	2	1	0	1.8
Fifth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	1	2	1.8

Students produced words that were associated with food more frequently than other words in the cycle, as shown in Table 4.1. Students did not produce the ordinal numbers as frequently as descriptive words such as *delicious*, *disgusting*, or *tiny*. One possible reason for this finding is that during sharing time students chose to share about what they ate for lunch or different types of food that they consider to be *delicious* or *disgusting*.

Students produced the new target vocabulary word on the first day it was introduced. Target words were often sustained for two to six days prior to a drop in production, such as in *delicious*. Students produced the words for the first few days because I created lessons and activities that provided students opportunities to use the target vocabulary. There were days when a target word was not used because I did not provide specific opportunities to guide students to produce the word. I was explicitly

teaching a new vocabulary word and encouraging opportunities for production of the new target word. The basic premise of the model presented by Beck et al. (2002) is to encourage student use of target vocabulary immediately. Students' production of target vocabulary shifted to using the newest word that was introduced. The shift in production may explain why some words were not produced on particular days and when the word was used later in the cycle, it was used spontaneously by the students. For example, on day three the word *tiny* was not produced while students switched their focus to the new target word, *devour*, which was introduced and produced eight times.

There were spikes in production where students participated in an activity where they used the target word. For example, on days seven and fourteen the students participated in vocabulary activities that were designed to encourage the use of target vocabulary and students were successful. On day seven, students made a floor graph of *delicious* and *disgusting* things with plastic play food and photographs. The students decided which column to put each item and told why it was *delicious* or *disgusting*. On day 14, I read an ABC book about a garbage truck that provided many opportunities to discuss items that are *disgusting*.

#### Teacher Observation Journal

The Teacher Observation Journal recorded how students reacted to the vocabulary activities, examples of how students used the target vocabulary words, and my reactions to focusing time on vocabulary.

Students began using the target vocabulary while reading books, writing stories, and while having conversations with each other. Sia Mee was writing a story during

writer's workshop about eating pizza with her family; she added that she *devours* her pizza. Yago told a friend that he *devours* his food at lunch. The target word *devour* was the only verb that was taught during cycle one. I did not teach how to conjugate the verb in different contexts. Urbano conjugated the verb *devour* to say Kristina is *devouring* her food when he was looking at the student-friendly definition and picture of the word *devour*. The picture next to the word *devour* is a photograph of Kristina eating a chicken leg at lunch time. From this example, students appear to be gaining confidence with language and internalizing different forms and structures of spoken English.

I feel like the students are really using the new words in their everyday vocabulary. I have really enjoyed focusing on vocabulary. I feel like the students are gaining confidence with their English skills at a quicker rate than in the past by using more academic language. I was very proud of my students today. Things are going well and I can't wait to see their progress over the year. They are becoming more confident with the words and feeling a sense of accomplishment over learning such difficult words.

Focusing on students' production allowed for spontaneous use of the target vocabulary. Whenever an opportunity presented itself to include a target word in conversations, I would use the word or guide students to produce the word. While playing outside, the class incorporated target vocabulary in authentic and meaningful ways in their everyday language.

After the fire drill, we stayed outside to look on the ground for things that are tiny. They were using the word tiny constantly. Look at this tiny leaf, tiny pine needles, and tiny ant.

Students began using the target vocabulary in the mainstream classroom while reading books during reader's workshop. The checklist was only used in the KLDM classroom, but I took notes when a KLDM student used the target vocabulary in the mainstream classroom while I was collaborating with teachers in the morning. For example, after one day of instruction Brandon mentioned that the apples in the book he was reading looked *delicious*. Belicia was reading with a friend and proceeded to tell the friend about the *tiny* animals that were in her book. By the ninth day of the first cycle, Diega who speaks only a few words of English, and Sia Mee were comparing the *delicious* food in their books.

I am enjoying teaching vocabulary. It is fun to watch them make the transition from using a common word to a tier two word. I know that it is because of my teaching that they are using this word. It is rewarding.

Some students had difficulty using the target vocabulary. On many occasions, students would use the student-friendly definition of a word and not the target word. The use of student-friendly definitions in place of target vocabulary may indicate students find the definition more meaningful as they work to connect unknown word (target word) with known concepts (student-friendly definition).

I noticed that many students are using the definition rather than the tier two word. For example, when I asked Edwardo to explain his pizza, said that his pizza was

yummy rather than using the target word, *delicious*. Yago said his cookie was good rather than using *delicious*. Jamma said that a snake is yucky rather than using *disgusting*. Sai Mee said I eat fast pizza, meaning to say that she *devours* pizza, but used the definition of the word instead.

When a target word was introduced, I created the student-friendly definition which is consistent with the model by Beck, et al. (2002). The students aided in writing through a technique such as interactive writing, which “shares the pen” between the student and teacher and students take turns writing one letter at a time to write the definition. Interactive writing is used to give students ownership of the writing and for extra guided practice in the formation of letters and sounding out words with the guidance of the teacher.

I really like Beck’s model of student-friendly definitions. I incorporated having the students write out the definition by using interactive writing. They have a better understanding of the word because they took part in creating the definition and it is their handwriting on the interesting word wall.

On many occasions, students struggled to use the target word with the correct syntax. Students said *disgusting is a worm*, rather than saying *a worm is disgusting*. One reason for the confusion of word order may be because in the mainstream classroom the students were given sentence starters, something disgusting is... The students may have been trying to use the sentence starter without using the word *something*. Since the students are in the early stages of English language learning their understanding of English syntax is developing.

Students struggled to remember the ordinal numbers in the correct order. During instruction, I tried to make a connection between the beginning sounds of the number and the beginning sound of the ordinal number, for example, three and the target word third; four and fourth; and five and fith. Some students made the connection which aided in student production, but others still showed confusion.

While students participated in an extension activity in their reader's notebook, I noticed that their lack of understanding in concepts of print hindered their ability to identify ordinal numbers.

Many students got confused and put the arrow above the wrong person in their picture. I think many students aren't confident with their concepts of print in particular their left to right directionality. So, many students put the arrow over the first person instead of the third person. It was an interesting view of a road block they encountered.

I realized that many students were not sure which side to begin counting: the left side or right side. Directionality of print is a concept that students develop during kindergarten. During October when the ordinal numbers were taught, it is common for students to be confused about directionality of print.

### Authentic Assessment

The authentic assessment for cycle one contributed to the larger question of the effectiveness of the vocabulary model of Beck, et al. (2002). The assessment consisted of students drawing a picture on a T-chart of three things that are *delicious* and three things that are *disgusting*. I met individually with students and asked them to use the words

*delicious* and *disgusting* as they explained their drawings. Students were expected to demonstrate that they could name three *delicious* items and three *disgusting* items. Students had a better understanding of the target word *delicious* than the word *disgusting*. Table 4.2 shows the results of students' understanding of the target vocabulary *delicious* and *disgusting*, a score of three indicates that the student named three items correctly.

Table 4.2

*Cycle 1 Authentic Assessment: T-Chart*

Score	Number of Students Naming Delicious Items	Number of Students Naming Disgusting Items
3	12	9
2	2	3
1	0	1
0	0	1

Each student was asked to talk about their drawings of the *delicious* and *disgusting* things. Most students named the drawings without additional explanations. Three students explained the drawings by using their prior knowledge to retell a story. When Brandon explained why a pumpkin was *disgusting*, he said he tried it and threw up. He said that a crayon was *disgusting* because his little brother ate it and got sick and had to stay in bed for hours. When Diega was asked to explain why a butterfly was *disgusting*, she told about an experience in Spanish. She later said in English that a butterfly is just bad. Her answer was counted because she remembered when the word *disgusting* was introduced; we read a book which contained enlarged close-up images of insects which included a photograph of a butterfly. Relating new vocabulary words to a

student's prior knowledge and experiences is a meaningful and lasting way to retain vocabulary.

One possible explanation for a stronger understanding of the target word *delicious* could be due to the excitement that the students had when they talked about food they liked and thought was *delicious*, which mostly consisted of desserts and junk food. For example, during the authentic assessment students named cake, pie, pizza, and cookies as delicious items. Students may have had a solid understanding of the word *delicious* because it was mainly associated with food; whereas, the target word, *disgusting*, was associated with food, animals, bodily fluids, or garbage. The examples student spoke of include: a heart because there is blood in it, garbage, fish, a diaper, an apple in the garbage, and a worm.

Table 4.3

*Cycle 1 Authentic Assessment: Ordinal Number Ranking*

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Score	Students with Score
5	6
4	2
3	3
2	1
1	1
0	1

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The second part of the authentic assessment for cycle one tested students' production of ordinal numbers. As students looked at a photograph of five classmates standing in a line; they were encouraged to explain who was *first, second, third, fourth,*

and *fifth* in line. As Table 4.3 shows, 79% of the class could name three or more ordinal numbers. For example, six students provided all five ordinal numbers. More students provided *first* and *second* and student production decreased for words *third*, *fourth*, and *fifth*.

In sum, the direct vocabulary instruction and extension activities for cycle one showed an increase of student production of the target vocabulary words. If students were unable to produce the target word, they used the student-friendly definition to convey meaning. Throughout structured activities as well as spontaneous conversations, students demonstrated their understanding of target vocabulary by connecting new vocabulary to personal experiences.

#### Cycle Two: Non-Fiction

Cycle two target vocabulary corresponded with the science unit about animals. The non-fiction texts supported the observations students are guided to make during hands-on science investigations. The target vocabulary words were chosen based on the content of the science unit on animals. For example, the shells in the science investigations were *smooth* and *rough*, *large* and *small*, *same* and *different*. Without the understanding of the cycle two target vocabulary, students would not have the language to discuss how the shells and animals looked, felt, or how to compare them. These words were essential words that provided opportunities to use academic English to discuss the content of the science investigations.

## Checklists

Table 4.4 indicates that students had multiple days where they used the target words in their productive vocabulary and there were days when the students did not produce certain words. Each day is a snapshot of four-five students and not the entire classroom. A target vocabulary word may have been produced on a certain day but if the student was not on the checklist for that day, it was not recorded. On the first day of direct instruction for each word, the word was used multiple times except for the word *rough*. One reason for this occurrence could be due to introducing two words on the same day: *rough* and *smooth*. Students may have felt confused with the definitions or overwhelmed by two new vocabulary words in addition to the multiple other words that were previously taught.

Table 4.4

### Cycle 2 Student Production of Target Vocabulary

Words	Day															Daily Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
same	5	5	4	7	0	0	6	0	0	4	1	0	5	1	2	2.7
different	-	5	0	8	0	0	4	0	0	3	1	0	5	1	0	1.9
slimy	-	-	-	-	4	4	7	2	0	3	0	1	5	1	2	2.7
sharp	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	7	0	0	0	2	5	0	0	1.9
smooth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	5	0	0	5	0	1	2
rough	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	5	6	0	1.6
larger	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	0	5	0	0	2.6
smaller	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	6	0	0	3.5

Many students began using the target words soon after direct instruction. Students extended their use of the target vocabulary beyond direct instruction time and into other

parts of the day. Abdi was reading a book during free time and noticed that there was a photograph that looked *sharp*, as in pointy. He showed great excitement to share with the class. A few days later he shared that a bird is *sharp*. He meant to explain that the bird has a *sharp* beak, but did not have the vocabulary to fully explain his connection to the target word. Brandon was noticing students during the beginning of KLDM class time and said that Sabra looked *different* today because her hair was braided differently. Yago was looking at the snail and noticed that it looked *slimy*. These examples show that students did internalize the meaning of the target vocabulary and began to use the words in their productive vocabulary.

The patterns of cycle two daily checklists are consistent with the results in cycle one. Students produced the new target vocabulary on the first few days of instruction and during vocabulary extension activities that provided opportunities for production. When a new target word was introduced, the students turned their attention to the new target word and temporarily decreased production of the previously taught vocabulary. Despite the increased and decreased production, students appear able to retain their focus on the target vocabulary through out the duration of the cycle.

Students frequently produce target vocabulary when hands-on extension activities are planned. For example, day 13 of cycle two was a high language producing day. Students used every word in the cycle between five and six times. The extension activity on that day consisted of a hands-on science investigation with a wide variety of shells.

## Teacher Observation Journal

The direct instruction of the target vocabulary *same* and *different* had an impact on students' use of content-specific vocabulary. Students began using content-specific vocabulary centered on the animals such as gills or fins in the non-fiction unit which is different than the target vocabulary. One possible reason for their production is because they had direct instruction in target vocabulary which supported their vocabulary production of other descriptive words taught during science investigations. Most students produced the words *same* and *different* while using content-specific language to talk about the goldfish and guppies in the classroom such as gills or fins. Students used words to describe the fish such as: they have the *same* fins or they have the *same* gills.

While doing an activity where students had to find two objects that were the *same* or *different*, Yago mixed up the meanings of the words.

I was amazed that one student was told to find something that was different and he found two orange balls that were the same and he said that they were different. He was very confused with the words, when I thought different/diferente are cognates in Spanish/English that this would be easy for him, but I guess the connection was not made.

Some students switched the meaning of *rough* and *smooth* and were very confused about what *rough* meant.

Today students had a really hard time using the word rough. They had to find things around the room that were rough and hardly any of them could do it. Most students were getting the words rough and smooth mixed up. So they said that the

top of the table was rough which it was the opposite. Many were associating rough with something pointy like a corner of a book. I tried to communicate the correct meaning.

I felt as if I were choosing the wrong words to teach since they were not producing them with the same excitement as the words from cycle one. During sharing time the students were using the words from the first cycle more than the words from the current cycle. They shared about *tiny* things at their house or *delicious* food they ate; yet, during science investigations they used the target vocabulary frequently.

This cycle of words seems more difficult to get the kids to use. Many of the words are not directly found in text which makes it difficult but the concepts of the words are found in the text or in the illustrations. The students are given opportunities to use the words during the science investigations with the animals. The words are in the students' receptive vocabulary but many of the words have not been processed into their productive vocabulary.

Students showed excitement while participating in vocabulary extension activities. As a vocabulary extension activity, the students enjoyed playing games with the Interesting Word Wall where they made word associations. For example, a student needed to find something that goes with gooey (slimy) or a word that means it would hurt if you touched something (sharp). Students were enthusiastic to create turkey word hats, since cycle two ended before Thanksgiving.

Today we made Turkey word hats with all of the words we learned in cycle two...because we had so many teachers and volunteers in the room, students

were using the words constantly as they were gluing the words onto the hats. I was very excited and happy that the students felt comfortable producing so many words. They really have learned so much from the entire vocabulary project.

A majority of the time when the students produced a target word, it was in short phrases or one word utterances. The students needed sentence structure support. They struggled to use *same*, *different*, *larger*, and *smaller* in sentences. The focus of cycle four is based on this finding in order to directly teach the syntax surrounding comparatives.

Students' lack of general vocabulary affected how they produced the target vocabulary.

They could identify sharp things in the pictures but they didn't know the language for which part of the animal was sharp. For example, they saw that the owl had sharp claws but they didn't know the word claws. So that was a challenge for students to use the word correctly because they just wanted to say the dinosaur is sharp rather than saying the dinosaur's teeth and claws are sharp.

In this cycle, students used the target words in the mainstream classroom. Yago said that his reading pointer was the *same* color as his friends. Urbano was reading a book during guided reading and stopped to add that the tomatoes in the book looked *delicious*. A day after learning the target word *rough*, Sabra noticed that her jeans felt *rough* because the jeans had beads and sequins sewed on them. Students began to extend the use of the target words outside of the KLDM classroom where they had been first introduced to the vocabulary.

### Authentic Assessment

The authentic assessment for cycle two focused on student production of target vocabulary in a two part assessment. The assessment used materials and animals from previous science investigations to examine the type and amount of vocabulary the students would use in a one-on-one setting. In the first part of the assessment, a box of shells was placed in front of the student. The directions instructed the student to talk about the shells.

Table 4.5

*Cycle 2 Authentic Assessment: Number of Students Using Words*

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Words	Worm Description	Shell Description
sharp	0	14
different	10	12
same	4	12
smooth	6	10
rough	1	8
slimy	9	4
tiny	6	4
smaller	2	2
larger	4	2

---

The results show students produced particular words more than others to describe the shells. As Table 4.5 shows, every student used the word *sharp*; twelve students used *same* and *different*, ten students used *smooth*, and eight students used *rough* to describe the shells.

The second part of the assessment focused on describing worms, following the same format and directions as the assessment on shells. Students were prompted to tell me about the red worms and night crawlers in the science kits.

Table 4.5 also shows the results for the worm description. The words *different*, *slimy*, *smooth*, and *tiny* were the most commonly used words by the students during the assessment, but not necessarily the most commonly used words during the direct instruction in the cycle. For example, the word *sharp* was used by every student in the authentic assessment to describe the shells, but it was produced on average 1.9 times a day throughout the cycle. The word *smaller* was produced the most out of any word throughout the cycle according to the daily checklist, but was only used by two students during the assessment. The word *tiny* was a target vocabulary word from cycle one that students used throughout cycle two. This use shows that students are taking ownership of the words.

The results indicate students correctly connected words to appropriate contexts. For example, students did not describe any of the worms as *sharp*. In describing the shells, four students used the target word *slimy*, but these responses made sense when examined. For example, two students used the target word *slimy* to explain that there are no *slimy* shells. Jose mixed up the meaning of two words but changed his mind when he said, “This slimy. Not it’s smooth.” Sia Mee said, “I see slimy.” When asked if she sees slimy shells, she replied, “No.”

In sum, cycle two focused on descriptive words that could be used in a variety of contexts but in particular, the words were used to describe the animals and objects

presented in the hands-on science investigations. Students produced the words frequently during hands-on science activities because opportunities were carefully created for them to produce the words. The words were not haphazardly taught; they were taught with creating a structure with purposeful activities that were meaningful to the students.

### Cycle Three: Pre-Teaching Vocabulary with Fiction Texts

Cycle three target vocabulary was aligned with the fiction read alouds. The fiction texts supported student language growth by focusing on more language rich and longer texts. The target vocabulary words were chosen based on key vocabulary words students need to comprehend and retell the story. For example, students needed to understand the word *jealous* in order to comprehend the story *Frog in the Middle* because the main character was jealous of his friends. Without the understanding of the cycle three target vocabulary, students would not have the language to discuss the characters, problem, and solution of the stories. These words were literary words that provided opportunities to produce higher-level vocabulary in a variety of contexts.

### Checklists

Table 4.6 shows the daily averages of student vocabulary production for cycle three. The most frequently used words were chuckle, peek, and surprise. The activities that introduce and extended the meaning of these words focused on acting out the word, making class books, and sharing prior experiences. The words jealous, present, and surprise were used in the book *Frog in the Middle* which was the read aloud for days 1-6 of cycle three and the remaining words were used in the read aloud *The Gingerbread Girl*

on days 7-14. Student production for the words jealous, present, and surprise decreased when the read aloud was switched to the book *The Gingerbread Girl*.

Table 4.6

Cycle 3 Student Production of Target Vocabulary

Words	Day														Daily Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
jealous	8	5	3	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.4
present	-	-	3	4	1	3	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	1	1.3
surprise	-	-	-	8	2	3	4	0	2	0	4	0	0	1	2.4
lonely	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	1.3
devious	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	0	2	0	0	2	0	1.1
amazing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	5	0	0	1	3	2
peek	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	0	1	2	2.3
chuckle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	1	1	2.7

Students began using the target vocabulary on the first day of instruction during cycle three, yet there were many days where the students on the daily checklist did not produce the target vocabulary. Belicia made a text-to-text connection between the read aloud *Frog in the Middle* and the book *Those Shoes*, which was a book that was read in the mainstream classroom during Reader’s Workshop. In both books the main characters were jealous of their friends. Belicia noticed that in both stories someone was *jealous*.

Teacher Observation Journal

Cycle three focused on pre-teaching target vocabulary. In the beginning of the cycle, I was not happy with how the instruction went.

I pre-taught the vocabulary since that is my focus this cycle. I felt like it would have been easier to describe the word jealous with the illustrations and the context

of the story already being exposed to the students. It was a wordy definition that my lower language students did not pick up on until I gave many examples and other students gave many examples.

As the cycle proceeded, students benefited from pre-teaching which helped to change my thinking about pre-teaching.

Pre-teaching seems to be working in this cycle because most of the words need explanation before reading the story. The students need to know the words to fully understand the story.

Students were motivated to create class-made books centered on a target vocabulary words. Many books were made throughout all three cycles as a vocabulary extension activity.

I noticed today that the students really enjoy choosing books during free time that we made as a class. They really like the delicious and disgusting book where the students made faces as if they ate something delicious or disgusting. I think that I will continue making photograph books with the students to represent the words.

Students read the class books frequently during reading time. They showed enthusiasm and interest for the books; the multiple exposures to the target words in the books may be connected to student retention and production of the target words. I noted another occasion when students responded positively to class books.

They really love to create class books by taking pictures of themselves to use in the book. We took pictures of them acting out what it looked like to be surprised.

On the fifth day of cycle three, I noticed that students were using target words in their writing. Students were told during teaching time that they could add details to their stories by using interesting words and many students tried to incorporate the target words. Diega wrote a story that used *jealous*. She said that she was drinking juice and Mrs. Blake was *jealous*. Hakim used the word *surprise* to write about a *surprise* he had at home. Diega wrote about eating *delicious* food and when she *peeked* at her sister sleeping. I was impressed that students began producing the target words in their writing. This shows that students internalized the meanings of the target vocabulary words in order to incorporate the words into their writing.

Many students showed partial meaning of the target words at times throughout cycle three. For example, the word *jealous* was associated with being sad because in the illustrations of the read aloud, the character that was described as jealous was sad and crying when his friends were not playing with him. It was difficult to teach students the full meaning of a complex word to mean more than just being sad but to extend its meaning to really wanting something that someone else has. The same process happened when students were trying to understand the meaning of lonely. One student thought it meant only being sad. He told me that he fell on the playground and hurt his knee and felt lonely. It showed me that he really did not understand the full meaning of the word. Each day during cycle three, I reflected on the student examples of the target word and their illustrations in their Reader's Notebook to modify instruction the following day to further explain the definition in a new way or to extend the meaning of the word.

Students began to incorporate target words into their writing and classroom conversations.

Hakim ran up to me after we had shared amazing things and he said, “Mrs. Blake, I know something amazing...a diamond.” I asked why and he said because it sparkles! (A few moments later...) Urbano was not paying attention during sharing time today and was playing with the bottom of his shoe. I reminded him what good listeners do and he looked up at me and said, “My shoe is rough!” I couldn’t complain!

Throughout cycle three, students continued to use words from previous cycles. The class completed a science investigation in which they observed pill bugs and sow bugs also known as isopods. The students used many target words from the previous cycle to describe the bugs. Hakim noticed that the isopods looked the same. Edwardo used the word *tiny* from cycle one to describe the isopods. Sabra noticed another student putting a spoon into his mouth that was used to dig the isopods out of the dirt; she told her classmate that his actions were *disgusting*. Edwardo said that the container where the isopods were stored smelled *disgusting*. Belicia described shapes during an activity and said which shape was *larger*.

#### Authentic Assessment

The assessment for cycle three consisted of retelling the story *The Gingerbread Girl* which was one of the featured read alouds in this cycle. *The Gingerbread Girl* was chosen for the assessment because students voted it their favorite cycle three story. Each

student was asked to retell the story and encouraged to use the target because these were the words that were taught with the read aloud, *The Gingerbread Girl*.

Table 4.7 shows the total number of times students used target vocabulary during the retelling. Students used the target words *devious*, *peek*, and *lonely* the most. The target words *chuckle* and *amazing* were used the least. The number of times students used each word was inconsistent with the cycle checklist. The words *devious* and *lonely* were used the least throughout the cycle on the checklist and the words were used the most on the authentic assessment. One student included the word *delicious* into the retelling, which was a target word from cycle one. Many students used target words multiple times throughout the retelling.

Table 4.7

Cycle 3 Authentic Assessment: Individual Story Retelling

Words	Total Word Use
lonely	12
devious	20
amazing	4
peek	16
chuckle	5
cycle 1 word	
delicious	1

Students used some words more than others to retell the story. All students used the word *peek* to talk about how the old man and woman peeked into the oven to check the gingerbread girl cookie. Eleven students used the word *devious* to characterize the fox in the story who attempts to trick the gingerbread girl. Nine students used the word *lonely*

to describe the old man and old woman who wanted a gingerbread girl cookie to keep them company. Only five students used the word *chuckle* to describe how the fox laughed when he tried to trick the gingerbread girl.

It is possible highly reoccurring target words are the result of how these words were introduced to students. One possible reason could be that these words were initially introduced in a way that was meaningful to the students that allowed them to make a strong connection to the word. For example, when the word *peek* was introduced the students acted out the word by physically going outside the classroom door and into the hallway to peek at the class in the window.

When *lonely* was introduced the students made a class book with photographs. In each photograph there were two students playing together and one student sitting on the opposite end of the carpet pretending to feel *lonely*. On the first day of instruction, the students made connections with the new target word *lonely*.

Today the students could identify with the picture of the boy feeling lonely. In their Reader's Notebooks they drew a picture of themselves feeling lonely. Many students added tears and sad frowns. They all did a great job. Urbano didn't use the word lonely when I asked him to describe his drawing. He said I feel sad in my picture. They also made the connection between the word lonely and jealous. They knew that you could be jealous when friends won't play with you and you would also feel lonely if you don't have any friends.

The vocabulary extension activity for the word *devious* was to illustrate a time they or someone they knew was *devious*. The students responded positively to this activity.

I was worried that the students would have a hard time connecting to this word (*devious*). I was wrong! They had endless stories of someone being *devious*.

There were many stories of older brothers or sisters doing something *devious*.

The students retained the target vocabulary words when the direct instruction and vocabulary extension activities were meaningful to the students. When a connection was made between known information and new information, students produced those words more frequently in the assessment.

Cycle three focused pre-teaching vocabulary from fiction texts. Students had many opportunities to produce the target vocabulary by interacting with the text and through vocabulary extension activities such as acting, class books, and retelling stories with props at free choice time. Students' interest in text and physical interaction with words through acting, drawings, and photographs was a big part of this cycle. Students continued to produce vocabulary from cycles one and two in classroom conversations.

#### Cycle Four: Teaching Comparatives and Superlatives

Cycle four was created after reflecting on the results of cycles one, two, and three. Factors that hindered students' production of target vocabulary were examined. A common observation from all three cycles included students struggling to use the target word with the correct syntax. The fourth cycle allowed for five days of direct instruction on previously taught words focusing on comparatives. The fourth cycle was designed to

reteach and extend student understanding of sentence structure when using target words. Since word meanings were taught in cycle two, the focus was on sentence structure; thus allowing cycle four to be unique. Cycle four consisted of direct instruction on how to produce the words *smaller than*, *taller than*, *the tallest*, and *the smallest* in a sentence. Read alouds were not included in this cycle; vocabulary extension activities were included.

### Checklists

As Table 4.9 shows, students produced the target vocabulary *taller than* and the *tallest* the most. One possible reason for the connection to the words *taller than* and *the tallest* could be due to the extension activities throughout the five day cycle. The activities focused on measuring the height of the students in the KLDM class to determine who is *taller* or *smaller than* another student and who is *the tallest* and *the smallest* in the class. Another activity focused on building towers with blocks and discussing whose tower is *the tallest* and *the smallest* and whose is *taller* and *smaller than* someone else's tower.

Table 4.10

### Cycle 4 Student Production of Target Vocabulary

Words	Day					Daily Average
	1	2	3	4	5	
taller than	8	9	4	3	3	5.4
smaller than	6	0	5	1	2	2.8
tallest	-	-	-	2	7	4.5
smallest	-	-	-	1	6	3.5

The class made a book about *taller than* using photographs of two students standing back to back as in measuring height. This book may have had an impact on students' connections to the word *taller than* and *the tallest*. I noted students' reactions to this activity.

They really enjoyed the book and seeing their picture. We read through it and the kids couldn't wait until they could read it during free time! They all ran over to the book and wanted to read it.

### Teacher Observation Journal

Cycle four focused on direct instruction on how to produce comparatives and superlatives in a sentence. With direct instruction on how to use the academic language of I am taller than X or shorter than X, the students used the words correctly to compare someone's height to themselves. Students were enthusiastic during the vocabulary extension activities when they compared their height to someone else or compared the height of a tower they built to another tower. The students positively responded to direct instruction for the target vocabulary and tried their best to apply it to speaking.

Students were taught how to compare their height to another student's height and the language to use when someone is taller than/shorter than you. The students were highly motivated doing the extension activity. They wrote down who was *taller than* they are and who was *shorter than* they are, but many students changed the language.

Some students wanted to use bigger than, which definitely works and shows that they are applying the -er ending to other words. Urbano used the phrase that one is bigger, which works. I think that the term bigger is the foundation word that

students build from. I will remember that next year as I teach the students. I will teach bigger than first then build to larger than and taller than.

Students struggled to switch between forms. Their confusion shows language growth, because students were showing their first attempts to produce new language structures and forms. The confusion can also indicate that too many forms of words were taught in a short period of time.

They wanted to only focus on one form of sentence structure. They either wanted to say that one is *the tallest/smallest* or that one is *taller than* that one. It was harder for them to switch back and forth between the two forms.

#### Authentic Assessment

The authentic assessment was a one-on-one assessment that consisted of students looking at a picture of five classmates of different heights standing in a line. The students were prompted to talk about the photograph and encouraged to use the target words.

Table 4.9

#### Cycle 4 Authentic Assessment: Height Comparison

	Total Word Use
smallest	8
tallest	8
smaller than	10
taller than	19

The results of student production of target vocabulary during the authentic assessment are listed in table 4.9. The comparatives were used more frequently than the superlatives in the assessment. The results of the authentic assessment coincide with the

total number of words produced during the cycle according to the checklist. The target word, *taller than*, was used the most on both the authentic assessment and the cycle checklist totals.

Students produced cycle four target vocabulary throughout the cycle during instruction and throughout extension activities. The students were able to internalize the target vocabulary quickly, as this cycle consists of only five days of instruction. Students showed growth in understanding language structure and successfully produced comparatives and superlatives.

### Summary

In sum, the four action research cycles provided positive results in student vocabulary production. Vocabulary instruction and production is more complex than simply introducing words and placing them on an interesting word wall. There is a great deal of accountability on the teacher to introduce words in a manner that focuses student attention to the word in a meaningful way, to plan creative extension activities for students to produce the word, guide discussions that lead students to production, and to provide meaningful authentic assessments.

Students were enthusiastic to use new words, but they did not always have the English grammar to apply target vocabulary to new situations. By including instruction in how to produce the word in a sentence with the correct syntax, students are more likely to produce the word. Creating multiple opportunities to interact with and produce the word is critical for the word to shift into a students' productive vocabulary. To retain the understanding of the target word, it is important to incorporate meaningful and personal

connections to words. In Chapter Five, I will discuss major findings of the results, their implications for the classroom, and suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

With an increasing number of ELLs entering school in the United States, it is imperative that the areas of second language acquisition and the development of academic vocabulary continue to be researched. The current educational model requires high stakes testing of students, even those students with limited English language proficiency. The emphasis on standardized tests means that students are quickly pushed to become proficient in English at younger ages. Teachers of ELLs must make instructional decisions for the students that involve simultaneous growth in language, literacy, and vocabulary. Raising the level of instruction and student achievement is extremely important for students who are considered at academic risk, many of whom are ELLs (Coyne et al., 2004). Without increased attention on vocabulary before second grade, students with low English proficiency will remain behind their higher English proficient peers (Biemiller, 2004).

This capstone project looked specifically at ESL kindergarteners' vocabulary production. I wanted to know the impact of Beck et al. (2002) vocabulary model on the productive vocabulary of ESL kindergarteners. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of using read alouds in combination with vocabulary learning activities and the explicit model for teaching vocabulary advanced by Beck et al. (2002). Guiding questions asked: 1. Does Beck, McKeown, and Kucan's (2002) vocabulary model work

with ESL kindergarten students? 2. As a result of implementing this vocabulary model, do ESL kindergarten students produce target vocabulary? This chapter examines major findings, limitations of the study, implications for the classroom, and suggestions for further studies.

### Major Findings

This study found that students need three components to successfully produce target vocabulary. The teacher needs to carefully prepare target vocabulary, deliver instruction in a meaningful manner, and lastly students need instruction in how to produce the word in a sentence. When these three components work together, a student has the opportunity to produce new vocabulary. My study concluded with three major findings:

1. The data supports the vocabulary model presented by Beck et al. (2002), but more importantly teachers choosing target vocabulary carefully and creating meaningful student-friendly definitions are as important as the model.
2. Valuable student connections are made when words are introduced in ways that activate prior knowledge and involve the senses.
3. Students benefit from instruction in how to produce target vocabulary in a sentence with the correct language structure and syntax.

### Presenting Vocabulary

Perhaps the most important finding this research provides is that the vocabulary instruction model presented by Beck et al. (2002) works to build oral language and expand the productive vocabularies of ESL kindergarten students. I want to remind the

reader that the vocabulary model presented by Beck et al. (2002) consists of a six step process of introducing a word: 1. Use the word in the context of the read aloud, 2. Students repeat the word, 3. Teacher gives the student-friendly definition, 4. Teacher gives examples, 5. Students give their own examples, 6. Students say the word again. The student-friendly definition needs to be created to match the students academic and language level.

Comparable to the findings of Penno et al., (2002) Coyne et al. (2004) Elley, (1998), students showed positive results in learning target vocabulary when explicit instruction was combined with repetitive readings of read alouds and vocabulary extension activities. Students produce the target vocabulary on the first days of instruction and continue to use the vocabulary throughout the school year. With time, students were able to internalize the meanings of words and take ownership of the words by relating the words to new situations and contexts.

Silverman's (2007b) study was comparable to my research because both studies support that ELL kindergarten students learn words that are explicitly taught during read-alouds. Her findings showed that with this support ELLs learned target words at the same rate and grew in general vocabulary at a faster rate than their English-Only (EO) peers. There were comparable teaching techniques that were effective in my study and in Silverman's study (2007b) that should be used in classrooms. These techniques include the introduction of words through the rich context of children's literature, student-friendly definitions, questions to guide students to think more deeply about the target words; examples of how to use the words in multiple contexts, act out meanings of

words, visual aids, pronouncing the target words, noticing the spelling of the words, comparing and contrasting words, and multiple exposures to the target words. These techniques promote student production which contributes to the larger goal of communicative competence in English.

### Activating Prior Knowledge

The second major finding from my research supports that it is important how the target vocabulary is introduced. Vocabulary instruction is complex and requires innovative planning to make sure personal connections are made. Students retained and produced vocabulary that was introduced in meaningful ways that connected to the students' prior knowledge. As part of Beck et al. (2002) model for introducing new vocabulary, the students share examples of the target word in order to relate the new word to their schema. Activating prior knowledge was a crucial step in the process of introducing the target vocabulary. According to Gibbons (2002), schema aids in the reading process by helping readers relate the text to their lives which helps increase reading comprehension. When a student does not have the schema for a particular topic or text, it becomes difficult to relate the new knowledge to existing knowledge. A teacher must scaffold the new information by using language and examples that the student can relate to and gain meaning from.

Students made important connections to target vocabulary that was introduced with sensory involvement. For example, the students retained and produced the target word *peek*. When the word was introduced the verbal explanation was not enough for students to understand the meaning; students understood the meaning of the word when

they each physically acted out peeking in the window on the classroom door. The physical movement acted as way to make a deeper connection to the word. The science investigations in cycle two gave students opportunities to make sensory connections with the target vocabulary as students observed, smelled, listened to, and touched the animals and shells.

Another important way words were introduced was through acting and showing an expression that captured the meaning of the word. For example, many class books were created with a photograph of students acting out a target word. Later these books were in the classroom library where students had multiple exposures to the words in the books as they practiced using the word and saw a concrete example of the word.

### Teaching Language Structure

Students were enthusiastic about producing new words but did not always have the language structure or grammatical skills for production. Students began trying to use the words to test grammatical structures, semantics, and syntax, which is consistent with Swain's (1995) functions of output. Students benefited from explicit instruction in how to produce words in a sentence with either sentence starters or instruction in syntax which was the focus of cycle four.

The vocabulary model by Beck et. al, (2002) is lacking in regards to fully teaching vocabulary to ELLs because it needs to extend vocabulary instruction to teach syntax and grammar. Teaching language structure takes the instruction from the word level and expands it to the sentence level. This instruction gives students a broader

understanding of how to produce the word and allows them to use the word in a sentence rather than just saying the target word.

Throughout cycles one, two, and three, students mainly used the target word or a short phrase when they were presented with an opportunity to produce target vocabulary. For example, during the science investigations in cycle two students often used the word *sharp* as a single word while pointing to a sharp shell rather than using a sentence to explain that the top of the shell is *sharp*. Cycle four was the response to students' understandings of target words. In cycle four, I wanted students to compare two objects rather than only pointing to a shell and saying *larger*. With explicit instruction in sentence structure students were able to produce sentences such as: Yago is *smaller than* Brandon. Instruction needed to meet students at their level of understanding and scaffold information to bring them to the next level of understanding and production.

Teachers must recognize the need to modify the vocabulary model of Beck et. al, (2002) in order to meet the needs of ELLs. The model was initially created for native English speaking students; which indicates that ESL teachers must make modifications to the model to meet the academic and language needs of the students in the classroom by choosing appropriate books, target vocabulary, and provide proper background knowledge to texts. More time must be spent to emphasize how to produce the target vocabulary in a sentence with correct grammar and syntax and provide multiple opportunities to interact with the target words through listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

## Implications for Teaching

A classroom environment and curriculum must be built with careful planning to provide multiple opportunities to interact with and produce words. The explicit instruction, read alouds, vocabulary extension activities, and a classroom environment focused on building oral language all worked together to guide student production of target vocabulary. I provided multiple hands-on activities where students had numerous opportunities to produce and interact with target vocabulary. Biemiller (2004) reported that when teachers explain words and add daily and weekly review of the words taught, there was an increase in the words learned. Biemiller's research supports this study by suggesting that using explicit vocabulary instruction with ELLs to give multiple encounters with words provides deep word knowledge. The students' vocabulary production increased with hands-on science investigations, where they were given a prime opportunity to use the vocabulary.

In the study, I did not just passively present a word and move on in hopes that students remembered the definition; with careful and creative planning, I created an environment that provided students with a foundation for success by bringing words to life. Goldenberg (2008) agrees that best practice for teaching ELLs vocabulary consists of explicit instruction and multiple exposures to words in a variety of contexts. He supports using visual representations of vocabulary, not just verbal explanations, performing activities where students are actively involved, and manipulating and analyzing word meanings. One reason students retained the target vocabulary is because they had numerous opportunities to manipulate, interact with, and produce a word.

According to Decarrio (2001) with these opportunities, the more likely it is that the word will shift into the long-term memory.

My research has implications for ESL teachers and mainstream teachers who teach ELLs and want to increase student vocabulary production in their classrooms. Teachers need to be aware that thoughtful planning of explicitly taught vocabulary is important. The planning must include understanding of the word but also how to use the word in a sentence by including instruction of syntax and grammar.

Part of the thoughtful planning includes creating student-friendly definitions that connect with what the student knows. I carefully planned the student-friendly definitions by trying to think of the most basic way to describe a target word that would connect to students' existing vocabulary. For example, my initial student-friendly definition for the target word *lonely* was to be alone. After great consideration of my students' language levels and considering what would be the most basic concept of the word; I simplified the definition even more to state feeling sad and having no friends. This definition resonated with the students and they were able to see the word used in the context of a read aloud. I constantly needed to pay close attention to student production and re-teach and expand the definition of a word when students did not fully understand the target word. For example, Yago said that he was *lonely* because he hurt his knee when he fell at recess. He did not understand the meaning of the word *lonely*; therefore I needed to modify my instruction and use his entry level view of the word to build upon to guide students to a deeper level of understanding.

Students need extension activities that are meaningful, such as making personal connections, movement, and interacting with the words through hands-on activities. Teachers should consider using specific adaptations, such as an interesting word wall, reader's notebooks, opportunities to share experiences with the target words, creating class books highlighting the target word, and other creative vocabulary activities.

Students gained confidence in themselves as English speakers due to knowing more sophisticated words. On occasions in the mainstream classroom, the NS did not know the meaning of the target words that the KLDM students knew. After telling the meaning of the word to their classmate, the KLDM student showed confidence as she used the student-friendly definition to describe what the target word meant. Students are more willing to take risks in the classroom to produce language and to try to use new words.

By bringing words to the students' attention and creating a language rich environment, the students are grasping kindergarten concepts at a faster rate than in the past. For example, by January most of the KLDM students could name all or most of the shapes which in the past have been difficult words for KLDM students to master. Students seem to be learning information more quickly; this may be due to many factors such as focusing on target vocabulary, an increase in student confidence, or students paying more attention to new words.

Heibert (2005) suggests that too much time is spent on literary words. Teachers must keep in mind that choosing words to teach must include words that are broad and can be applied to multiple contexts. My understanding of carefully choosing words to

teach has evolved, and I have developed a greater understanding of which academic vocabulary words are the foundation the students build from, such as words from cycles two and four, and which words are literary words that are higher level synonyms of words the students know, such as words from cycles one and three. For example, the words *smaller than* and *larger than* are words that are academic vocabulary that students will encounter in math, science, and in reading. These words are foundational words that are needed to participate in academic discussions. Some examples of literary words are words like *delicious* and *lonely*. Students will hear these words in language rich discussions and in literacy based contexts, but these words are a more sophisticated way of describing something. I have realized that it is essential to have a balance between literary words and words that are more foundational.

I learned that it is important to observe students' positive or negative reactions to instruction and content. Students were using the target vocabulary to describe why they did or did not like certain read alouds; they chose to use the words *delicious*, *disgusting*, *sharp*, *slimy*, and *amazing*. These were words that the students liked to produce; they resonated with the students and stuck throughout the cycle. The students use of the target vocabulary implies that the model presented by Beck et al. (2002) increased student production of target vocabulary and that students made meaningful connections with the words, the activities, and the read alouds. The target vocabulary gave students descriptive language in order to discuss the books. The students' motivation and interest in certain books may have had an impact on how they internalize target words from those particular books and if they produce those words more frequently than other words.

### Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this study is the small size of the participants. There were 14 participants in the study which was the total number of students in KLDM at the time of the action research cycles. A larger sample size of participants would have allowed for more generalizing of the results. Beck's model may not be researched enough at all levels. It is unknown if intermediate, middle school, and high school ESL students would benefit from Beck et al. (2002) model.

### Professional Growth and Insights

I have grown as a researcher throughout this study. It took time to become accustomed to teaching, managing my students, and recording data concurrently. At times within the first lesson, I realized that I struggled to keep track of student responses with the daily checklist. It was easier to use the checklist when the students were sharing in a large circle or when I was teaching; it became more difficult to record when the students were doing an extension activity and needed my assistance. For example, on the first day of the study the students were using glue sticks to glue the target vocabulary into their reader's notebook; I needed to set aside my checklist so I could help the students open glue sticks to complete the task. I felt overwhelmed on the first day to teach and record data at the same time. As the study progressed, it became easier to teach, manage student behavior, and record data simultaneously.

As I grew as a researcher I increased the amount of data I could record. There were instances where students were working and producing vocabulary, but I was on the other side of the room teaching a small group. I was unable to abandon my teaching in

order to listen for vocabulary production of other students. I may have missed instances where the students produced the target vocabulary because I was unable to listen to all 14 students at every moment during the KLDM time.

Being a novice researcher, I was not sure what details to write about in the teacher's observation journal in the beginning of the study. Looking back on the journal and trying to look for patterns I realized that I needed to be even more specific and needed to give more examples of students' responses. As I examined the data between cycles to make instructional decisions, I noticed ways to improve the journal, which allowed the journal to evolve with more details and more insights as each cycle progressed. It would have made my claims stronger if I had written more examples of students sharing personal experiences about a word.

The KLDM classroom space is shared. In the morning the space is a mainstream classroom and during the afternoon the space is the KLDM classroom. The bulletin board space and physical space in the room is shared between the mainstream teacher and me. I lacked bulletin board space for my interesting word wall and needed to be creative with how the materials for instruction were stored and organized. As the action research cycles progressed and more target vocabulary words were added to the interesting word wall, I did not have enough space and needed to remove the contents from the mainstream teacher's bulletin board in order to fit the target vocabulary from all four cycles on the wall. The location of the interesting word wall was not an ideal location. It was located on the wall behind the teacher's easel where a majority of the teaching takes place. I realized a few weeks into the study that students had a difficult time viewing the

interesting word wall because they sit on the rug and the easel prohibited a clear view.

Due to sharing a classroom space with another teacher, I did not have an option to move the interesting word wall because the remaining space in the room was covered with student work and teaching materials.

This study has allowed me to contribute to the field of ESL by conducting action research in my classroom. Action research challenged me to learn of new and innovative ways to enhance students' academic success through examining the problem, collecting data, reflecting on the results, and modifying instruction to continue to guide student progress. Action research is a valuable tool that I will continue to use in my teaching and learning for years to come.

Vocabulary is a foundational tool that students need for listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The results of my study will be beneficial for my district when making curriculum decisions; therefore, I plan to share my findings with colleagues and administrators in my school district. The administrators in my district have already expressed a need continue learning how to effectively and efficiently incorporate academic vocabulary into all content areas. It may be possible to share my results with professionals outside of my district at ESL, elementary, or literacy conferences. My research can begin a dialogue for raising the level of instruction for ESL students because with the proper scaffolding, purposeful planning, and thoughtful teaching all students can make immense academic gains. My students have shown that when the level of academic rigor is heightened, they will meet it and surpass expectations.

## Further Research Recommendations

There are many opportunities for further research with elementary English Language Learners. This research calls for more studies on the effectiveness of the model formed by Beck et al. (2002) with different age groups of ELLs. Future studies could examine ways KLDM supports oral language and literacy development in ELLs as compared to collaboration between the mainstream and ESL teacher in the mainstream classroom. During this study, the checklist was a data collection technique which did not record the exact phrase or sentence the student produced containing the target word. In a future study, it would be interesting to record student responses containing target words to understand how to teach sentence structure and grammar to increase student production of target vocabulary. There needs to be more research on the effectiveness of a school wide program and focus on vocabulary. Future research must examine the academic impact of focusing on vocabulary and oral language development in the primary years of school.

## APPENDIX

Consent Letter

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As you know, I am your child's KLDM teacher. I am completing a master's degree in teaching at Hamline University. As part of my graduate work, I plan to do a research project this school year. The purpose of this letter is to ask your permission for your child to take part in my research. The final paper will be a printed book that will be placed in the Hamline University's library. I may also publish my findings for other educators to use in the future.

My research will be based on kindergarteners' vocabulary development through teaching vocabulary words and activities to build vocabulary. I want to find out how to increase the English vocabulary of my students.

If your child participates in my research, his or her identity will be protected. No real names or identifying characteristics will be used. All results will be confidential and anonymous. You or your child may decide at any time not to participate in the study without any negative consequences.

I have already received permission for this research from my principal and from the director of Teaching and Learning as well as Hamline University.

Please return the permission form on the second page. If you have any questions, please call me at school between the hours of 6:30-2:15. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Jennifer Blake

Dear Mrs. Jennifer Blake,

I have received and read your letter about doing research on kindergarteners' vocabulary development. I understand that your goal is to better understand how to increase vocabulary development in kindergarten.

I give permission for my child,

\_\_\_\_\_ ,  
to participate in the research project that is part of your graduate degree program. I understand that all results will be confidential and anonymous and that my child may stop taking part at any time without negative consequences.

Signed,

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/Guardian)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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