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The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not Text Talk is an effective vocabulary teaching tool for English language learners. Text Talk lessons were presented to a second grade classroom. The first two week-long lessons were delivered without adaptations and the final two week-long lessons included adaptations for English Language Learners. Students were given a pretest and posttest to determine vocabulary growth over the course of the week-long lessons. The students were also videotaped to measure their level of behavioral engagement during the lessons. The vocabulary assessment scores and behavioral engagement levels of ten English language learners were then analyzed to determine the effectiveness of Text Talk lessons with and without adaptations. The results of the study indicated that the adapted Text Talk lessons seem to have been more effective in teaching the English language learners target vocabulary words and in keeping them engaged.

TEXT TALK AS A VOCABULARY TEACHING TOOL:
DOES IT MEET THE NEEDS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS?

By

Jessica A. Rooney

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Hamline University

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Committee:

Ann Mabbott, Primary Advisor
Kathryn Heinze, Secondary Advisor
Joan Mitchell, Peer Reviewer

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Read-alouds have always been a favorite part of my teaching day. This is a time for teachers to read books aloud to the whole class and for students to enjoy the amusing stories with colorful illustrations. The newcomer English Language Learners (ELLs) in the class especially seem to enjoy this opportunity to relax from the language demands involved in the rest of their academic day.

I share the job of teaching reading with my mainstream teaching partner in a second-grade, Language Academy classroom. Language Academy is a program the urban school district that I work in started in order to provide extra language support for beginning-level, English language learners (ELLs). My mainstream teaching partner and I work hard to integrate vocabulary lessons into our daily read-alouds. In addition, we teach Text Talk lessons about twice a month. Text Talk is a read-aloud method designed by Isabel Beck and Margaret McKeown (2001) to teach higher level thinking skills and sophisticated vocabulary in the primary grades. We started to incorporate Text Talk lessons into our reading curriculum four years ago when our school's literacy coach recommended them as an effective vocabulary teaching method.

While all of the students seem to enjoy the entertaining children's trade books used in Text Talk lessons, the Language Academy students seem to lack the basic vocabulary required to understand the explanations given to the higher-level, target words. For example, the target word *peculiar* might be explained to students by saying,

“When something is *peculiar*, it is unusual or strange. It would seem *peculiar* if you were all silent when I walked in the classroom.” While this explanation would be helpful for most native English speakers, Language Academy students will likely be left with more questions such as “What is unusual? What is strange? What is silent?”

The fact that words used to explain the target word are not often in the word banks of beginning, English language learners made me question whether or not Text Talk lessons are meeting the vocabulary needs of all of our students. I also wondered how I could adapt Text Talk lessons to make them more accessible to Language Academy students. These questions prompted me to study the effectiveness of Text Talk as a method for teaching vocabulary to second-grade, Language Academy students and to explore the impact of making ELL adaptations to make the lessons more accessible. This chapter describes the importance of vocabulary development for ELLs, defines Text Talk, and introduces the guiding questions that lay the foundation for my research.

Vocabulary Issues for English Language Learners

Vocabulary instruction for ELLs is often a challenging issue in the mainstream classroom. Teachers struggle to make their vocabulary instruction meet the needs of students with vocabularies ranging from fewer than 300 words in English, in the case of Language Academy students (St. Paul Public Schools, 2006), to students with vocabularies hundreds of words above grade level. By the end of second grade, for example, a 4,000 word gap exists between students in the lowest and highest vocabulary quartile (Biemiller, 2004). It is a difficult task for teachers to choose appropriate words for vocabulary instruction when the range of student vocabularies is so large. The result

is that words targeted for grade-level instruction are often out of reach for students with beginning level English skills. In addition, the words teachers use to explain the target vocabulary words are not in many English language learners' vocabularies, which can make it challenging for students to keep focused during instruction.

Another challenge for ELLs is that mainstream vocabulary instruction often takes for granted that students understand function words. Function words are defined as “words that cue a reader or speaker to the structure of the sentence: *are, that, a, to, or, the, of* and so forth” (Lehr, Osborn, & Hiebert, 2004, p.21). English language learners in the mainstream classroom often do not receive vocabulary instruction that addresses other difficult function words such as *in spite of, as big as, although, even though, and others*. These words can be especially challenging for ELLs because they are abstract and often overlooked during mainstream instruction because native English speakers learned them without formal instruction as part of their oral language development.

Teachers often rely on incidental vocabulary learning, learning that results from encountering unknown words during reading, as a way for students to learn new words. The problem is that incidental learning of unknown vocabulary words is not a reliable method for building the vocabularies of English language learners (Carlo, August, McLaughlin, Snow, Dressler, Lippman, Lively, & White, 2004). While it can work well for avid readers who are experienced at using context clues to make sense of new words, it does not work as well for young students and many ELLs. Incidental vocabulary learning is more challenging for English language learners than English-only students because a higher percentage of the words in the text are unknown to ELLs (Carlo et al.

2004). In addition, ELLs do not have the advantage of native English speakers in being able to make use of linguistic cues to understand word meaning (Stroller & Grabe, 1995). Teachers have a challenging and critically important job in delivering vocabulary instruction that meets the needs of ELLs in a mainstream classroom.

Vocabulary Development and English Language Learners

Researchers agree that an emphasis should be put on helping English language learners acquire a solid vocabulary foundation. Vocabulary is broadly defined as “knowledge of words and word meanings” (Lehr et al., 2004, p.5). This definition can be narrowed by differentiating oral vocabulary and print vocabulary. Words identified and used in speaking and listening make up our oral vocabularies, while words identified and used in reading and writing make up our print vocabularies (Lehr et al., 2004). Vocabulary building and practice should be seen as a curricular anchor because it plays a significant role in ELL program success (Gersten & Baker, 2000).

Vocabulary development is critical to ELLs because research shows that vocabulary knowledge is a primary predictor of reading comprehension (August & Hakuta, 1997) and fluency (Grabe, 1991). Slow vocabulary development for ELLs makes them less able to understand grade-level texts and causes them to fall behind their English speaking classmates (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005). National data indicate a large gap exists in the reading performance of ELLs and native speakers of English. Fourth graders who are native speakers of English had a 35 point scale score advantage over ELLs on the National Assessment of Educational Progress reading test (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). A 2000-2001 summary report found

that only 18.7% of non-native English speakers scored above the state norms for reading comprehension (Kindler, 2002). There is an obvious need for strong vocabulary instruction for ELLs in our schools. The literature provides support for several instructional practices when it comes to enhancing ELL vocabulary development, and I will address them in my literature review.

Text Talk

Text Talk was developed by Beck and McKeown as a “supplemental curriculum of robust vocabulary instruction” (Moses, 2005, p.1). It is a method in which teachers read aloud children's trade books to boost young students' ability to create meaning from decontextualized text. Text Talk lessons have several features: selection of texts, initial questions, follow-up questions, pictures, background knowledge and vocabulary. Stories are selected that contain organized events and challenging elements that provide an opportunity for children to build meaning. Initial questions ask students to describe and explain what is happening in the text. Follow-up questions ask students to elaborate on their first responses and continue to develop their thinking. Pictures are usually shown after the children have listened and responded to a section of the book, so children do not rely on them too much when making meaning of the text. Teachers are advised not to invite background knowledge responses because Beck and McKeown observed that students often respond tangentially, which can lead to loss of story comprehension. For example, a student might respond to a teacher question about why the monkey ate the banana in the story with an answer describing a time when she made banana bread with her dad. This tangential answer can distract the class from focusing on the original story

comprehension question. The final feature of Text Talk is that sophisticated vocabulary words are selected for direct instruction after the story and discussion are completed (Beck & McKeown, 2001).

It is important to acknowledge that English language learners rely heavily on picture support and background knowledge to make meaning of new words (Swanson & Howerton, 2007). This mismatch between the basic building blocks of Text Talk and what ELLs need to understand texts poses a problem for ELL success. The sophisticated words chosen for Text Talk lessons can also present a challenge for ELLs because they often lack the basic vocabulary required to understand the definitions given to more complicated words. Interestingly, the recently marketed edition of Text Talk briefly mentions the use of pictures and background knowledge in a list of possible adaptations for ELLs but does not include the adaptations in the actual lesson plans.

Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, (2002) provide a three-tier approach to choosing words appropriate for vocabulary instruction during Text Talk. Words are seen as belonging to one of the three tiers based on their utility level. Tier One words are identified as basic words, *mad* and *cat* for example, that do not usually require instruction in school. Tier Two words are identified as more sophisticated words, *entirely* and *concentrate* for example, that are frequently used by established language users. These words are used in Text Talk lessons because they effectively add to the language ability of students. Tier Three words, *molecule* and *isthmus*, are not candidates for Text Talk instruction because they are considered low frequency words that are best taught within specific content areas. Two research studies indicate Text Talk is effective in teaching

vocabulary to primary grade children (Beck & McKeown, 2007), but neither study looked at its effectiveness with English language learners.

Role of the Researcher

I have been teaching in two Language Academy classrooms in St. Paul for the last six years. My teaching responsibilities include teaching both Reader's Workshop and Writer's Workshop, which are daily models for instruction that include mini-lessons, independent work time and a closing share time to review what was learned. I teach in a second grade classroom and a third grade classroom in which approximately 30% of the students are Language Academy students. The other students are native English speakers who have a wide variety of academic abilities that range from significantly below grade level to several years above grade level. My mainstream teaching partners and I plan, teach, and assess all reading and writing lessons together. Some lessons are team taught in a large group setting, while others are taught in small group settings to provide more individualized instruction. We use read-alouds on a daily basis and often relate them to a strategy or theme we are studying. We also teach Text Talk lessons about twice a month and base them on the framework provided in *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction* (Beck et al., 2002). We look to see if our students use the target vocabulary words in their speech and writing, but we have not been formally assessing the effectiveness of these lessons in teaching vocabulary to our students. My observation has been that our English language learners have not been very successful using the target vocabulary words in their speech and writing. I often wonder how I could assess their vocabulary learning to see if my observations are correct. I also question if and how I

should be adapting Text Talk to incorporate ELL instructional strategies to make these lessons more assessable.

Background of the Researcher

I have been interested in vocabulary development since I started working as a Language Academy teacher. Students qualify for Language Academy if they speak fewer than 300 words of English. Native English speakers and ELLs work together in the same classroom on the same academic material, while ELL and mainstream teachers provide adaptations and scaffolding assistance. Language development is integrated throughout the day across all academic subjects (St. Paul Public Schools, 2006). It is exciting to be a part of their language journey as these motivated learners fill up their word banks to the level of their native English-speaking friends. I am fascinated by the process of how and when ELLs learn the words that they do.

I am motivated personally and professionally to find effective ways to teach vocabulary and work to narrow the vocabulary gap. This gap is illustrated in research that found linguistically “poor” first graders know an average of 5,000 words, while linguistically “rich” first graders know about 20,000 words (Moats, 2001). While this gap does not account for the fact that many English language learners have a rich vocabulary in their first language, it does point to a large vocabulary disparity among all students. It is obviously not just the students learning English who are in need of vocabulary instruction because many English-only students come into second grade with limited vocabularies. This vocabulary gap is a significant barrier to students’ ability to read, write and understand grade-level material. I have seen the impact of limited

vocabularies with my own students and hope my study will provide insight into how we can work to narrow the vocabulary gap.

Guiding Questions

My research hopes to provide insights into the following questions: Do English language learners learn vocabulary through Text Talk? If not, what adaptations need to be made for English language learners? If so, could making adaptations for ELLs improve vocabulary acquisition? These guiding questions will provide the foundation for my research in a second-grade Language Academy classroom. The answers to these questions will hopefully provide insights for researchers and teachers about the effectiveness of Text Talk as a method for teaching vocabulary to ELLs.

Summary

In this study, I focused on whether or not ELLs learn vocabulary through Text Talk. I looked at the impact of adapting lessons to include instructional strategies proven to work with ELLs. I am motivated to find a way to narrow the vocabulary gap that exists among socioeconomic groups and increase ELL vocabulary acquisition. There is a need for strong vocabulary instruction to increase ELLs' reading comprehension and keep their scores competitive with English-only speaking peers. I used the guiding questions to provide a framework for my research. The results of my study provide some insight into the effectiveness of Text Talk as a method of teaching vocabulary words to second-grade, beginning English language learners. My research will hopefully raise awareness of teachers and other researchers about the effectiveness of adapting Text Talk lessons to teach vocabulary to English language learners.

Chapter Overviews

In Chapter One I introduced my research by establishing the purpose, significance and need for the study. The context of the study was briefly introduced as was the role, assumptions and biases of the researcher. The background of the researcher was provided. In Chapter Two I provide a review of literature relevant to English language learners and vocabulary development. Some questions I will address in this chapter include: What does research say about effective vocabulary instruction for English language learners? What does the literature say about choosing words and books for vocabulary instruction? What does research say about how read-alouds can be used as an effective, vocabulary teaching method? How do read-alouds best meet the needs of English language learners? What are the results of the studies done on Text Talk? Finally, do English language learners learn vocabulary through Text Talk? Chapter Three includes a description of the research design and methodology that guides this study. Chapter Four presents the results of this study. In Chapter Five I reflect on the data collected. I also discuss the limitations of the study, implications for further research and recommendations for adapting Text Talk lessons to teach vocabulary to beginning level, English language learners.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

My research question examines whether or not English language learners learn vocabulary words through Text Talk. I will first present literature on what researchers consider when examining what it means to know a word. Then, I will explore what researchers have found to be effective strategies for teaching vocabulary to English language learners. Some of these strategies will be employed as adaptations to Text Talk as part of my study. Next, I will summarize what researchers say are important considerations when choosing words and books for vocabulary instruction. I will review research related to read-alouds as a vocabulary teaching method in primary-grade classrooms and look specifically at research on the effectiveness of read-alouds with English language learners. Reviewing read-alouds is important because Text Talk uses them as a basis for teaching sophisticated vocabulary to students. Finally, I will summarize the results of two studies done on the effectiveness of Text Talk before identifying the gap in research that I want to explore.

Synthesis of Literature

What Does It Mean To Know A Word?

Researchers have found that a multifaceted approach is necessary when analyzing the complex task of determining word knowledge. It is not clear cut whether someone absolutely knows or does not know what a given word means. At least two

considerations must be examined when thinking about word knowledge, both the extent and the multiple dimensions of students' word knowledge (Beck et al., 2002).

Researchers have analyzed the extent of a person's word knowledge in different ways. Dale (1965) used four stages to examine the range of word knowledge. These stages included stage one in which a person has never seen a word before, stage two in which a person has heard a word, but does not know what it means, stage three in which a person recognizes it in context, and stage four in which a person knows a word well (Dale, 1965, as cited in Beck et al., 2002). Beck, McKeown & Omanson (1987) developed a continuum to acknowledge even more points of word knowledge understanding. The points on that continuum included the following: having no knowledge, having a general sense of a word, having a narrow context-based knowledge, having knowledge of a word that still can't be recalled to use in appropriate situations, and having a decontextualized knowledge of a word, its relationship to other words and how it can be used metaphorically.

Researchers have also examined the multidimensionality of word knowledge. Nation (1990) described eight aspects of word knowledge, which included knowledge of a word's written form, spoken form, grammatical behavior, frequency, stylistic register, associations with other words, conceptual meaning, and knowledge of what other words a given word commonly occurs with (Nation, 1990, as cited in Nagy & Scott, 2000). Laufer (1998) examined another dimension of word knowledge in making a distinction among types of relationships between words including morphological relationships in

which prefixes and suffixes are used and semantic relationships in which synonyms and antonyms are used (Laufer, 1998 as cited in Nagy & Scott, 2000).

These multiple dimensions do not fall neatly onto a continuum because the different facets of word knowledge appear to be independent (Nagy & Scott, 2000). In a study of four postgraduate university English language learners, Schmitt (1998) measured the development of four types of word knowledge including written form, associations, grammatical behavior, and meaning. He concluded that it is not possible to predict a given type of word knowledge based on another type of word knowledge and therefore, there was no evidence of a developmental hierarchy for word-knowledge types. Given the independent nature of word knowledge aspects, each of these aspects was best characterized by a matter of degree. The independent nature of the multiple dimensions of word knowledge makes vocabulary instruction a complex task for teachers.

Effective Instructional Methods for ELL Vocabulary Instruction

Literature provides support for several instructional practices when it comes to enhancing ELL vocabulary development. These include activating prior knowledge and building background knowledge, ensuring ELLs know the meaning of basic words in English, teaching cognates, using visual aids and reviewing and reinforcing vocabulary words.

Activating prior knowledge and build background knowledge. English language learners' prior knowledge, the knowledge students bring to a text, should be activated and drawn upon to increase comprehension and vocabulary retention. It is important to tap into students' prior knowledge, in their native language if possible, in order to provide a

context for new vocabulary words. This context provides a foundation for understanding as students learn new vocabulary words and concepts. English language learners benefit from connecting concrete examples from their prior knowledge to the abstract new words and concepts they are learning (Swanson & Howerton, 2007). Vocabulary instruction is most successful when it provides labels for concepts that develop out of experiences. These experiences help build background knowledge, the information students need to know to understand a text. Therefore, teachers should provide concrete learning experiences so that students have an opportunity to build background knowledge in areas they are lacking (Schifini, 1994).

Building student background knowledge around a given topic and providing familiar content reading material helps English language learners avoid reading comprehension difficulties (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). Comprehension tasks are more difficult for second language readers when the structure and topic of a given text are unfamiliar, while texts with familiar topics and structure are less difficult for second language readers (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). A student's native language can also serve as supportive background knowledge. Students who have a native language with a writing system similar to the English alphabet are able to transfer that knowledge to reading in English (Odlin, 1989, as cited in Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). Literacy skills in any language will benefit students learning to read and write in English. While English language learners who are literate in their native language still require English reading instruction, they are at an advantage over students who are not literate in their native

language and have to learn a new language while developing literacy skills (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005).

A study done by Ulanoff and Pucci (1999) demonstrated the importance of activating student prior knowledge in their native language. They researched the vocabulary acquisition of third-grade, English language learners in three different read-aloud scenarios. A control group heard the story read in English without explanation or intervention. A second group of students heard the same story read in English with concurrent translation into Spanish. The third group heard the same story in English, but teachers also built background knowledge by previewing challenging vocabulary and significant points in Spanish. In addition, the teacher followed the read-aloud with a review of the story in Spanish. Both the preview and review portions incorporated pictures and role-playing to help build background knowledge. The results indicate that the preview-review group made mean gains of 57%, while the control group made 19% gains and the concurrent translation group made only 12% gains. Researchers concluded that strategies that build background knowledge as part of read-alouds and use a student's native language to preview and review read-alouds have a positive effect on learning second language vocabulary.

Ensuring students know meanings of basic words. It is important that English language learners learn and have a grasp of the most basic, frequently used words in English (Nation 2001, as cited in Blachowicz, C. L., Fisher, P. J., Ogle, D, Watts-Taffe, S., 2006). Mainstream teachers often overlook these basic words because native English speaking students already know them. For example, most native speakers do not require school-

based instruction on the meaning of words like *run*, *clock*, or *happy*, but many ELLs need to be taught those words. While some of the basic words are rather easy to teach using pictures and labels, other words are more challenging to visualize because they are modifiers and abstract words (Anderson & Roit, 1998 as cited in Hickman, Pollard-Durodola, & Vaughn, 2004). Differentiated instruction in the mainstream classroom is required in order to give ELLs an opportunity to build a strong, basic vocabulary foundation, which will help them understand explanations of academic vocabulary that will come later.

Teaching Cognates. Cognate-related instruction can also be an effective way of tapping into a student's native language to teach vocabulary words (Blachowicz et al., 2006; August et al., 2005). Cognates are defined as, "...words that are related across languages because of common ties to an ancestral language (Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1996, p. 99). Native Spanish speakers would likely benefit from learning how to use cognate knowledge because estimates say there are between 10,000 and 15,000 Spanish-English cognates (Nash, 1997). Those cognates can account for 30% - 50% of the typical well-read person's active vocabulary (Lehr et al., 2004). Researchers have found that native Spanish-speaking ELLs who are aware of cognates in Spanish and English have higher English reading comprehension scores than their non-cognate savvy peers (Nagy, Garcia, Durgunoglu, & Hancin-Bhatt, 1993). It is also helpful to identify commonalities between a student's native language and English when teaching new words. This can be done by teaching roots, prefixes, suffixes in addition to cognates when appropriate (Helman, 2004 as cited in Swanson & Howerton, 2007). Cognate

instruction is important for Spanish-speaking ELLs in improving reading comprehension, but may not be as practical as other vocabulary methods for classrooms with ELLs from a variety of non-European language backgrounds.

Using Visual Aids. English language learners benefit from the use of visual aids when learning new vocabulary. Visual aids can include a variety of methods, including writing a word on the board, showing a picture, using facial expressions and gestures, and incorporating graphic organizers. These visual aids help ELLs make meaning of words and ideas that may be difficult to understand. Gersten & Geva (2003) researched effective instructional practices for teaching ELLs to read and found that they benefit from the use of actions, gestures and facial expressions to help understand new vocabulary words and clarify concepts. Researchers have also studied the use of a variety of methods to teach vocabulary to students, including presenting the words visually, defining words, using gestures and other visual techniques like pictures. They found that the use of these visual aids produced higher comprehension and a more accurate reading of story words when compared to teachers previewing a story by reading it to the students (Rousseau, Tam, & Ramnarain, 1993, as cited in Gersten & Baker, 2000). Word maps are examples of effective graphic organizers that help ELLs visually represent a vocabulary word. These maps place the vocabulary word in the middle and surround it with boxes that include the word's definition, synonyms, antonyms and a picture of the words or a sentence using the new word (Swanson & Howerton, 2007).

Reviewing and Reinforcing. Review and reinforcement of vocabulary words is another critical instructional practice for ELLs. Learners benefit from hearing and using new

vocabulary words used multiple times in both teacher- and student-directed activities. Teacher-directed activities may include read-alouds with a vocabulary focus, story mapping, retellings, and dramatization of a story. Student-directed reinforcement activities are especially important considering the limited amount of time teachers have for direct instruction. Reinforcement activities might include listening to tapes in the students' first language, involving parents in at-home practice, or keeping tallies of how often students hear the target words being used throughout the day (August et al. 2005). Researchers agree that English language learners benefit from multiple opportunities to practice saying, reading, writing and using new vocabulary words. New vocabulary words have an increased probability of sticking with ELLs if students engage in a variety of activities that allow them a chance to practice using those words (Swanson & Howerton, 2007, Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). It is clear that effective vocabulary instruction for ELLs requires a comprehensive approach.

Which Words?

There is no universal answer to the question of which vocabulary words should be taught. Researchers have proposed looking at usefulness and frequency of words, challenge level, as well as function and context when making vocabulary choice decisions.

Usefulness and frequency of encountered words are other important considerations when choosing vocabulary words for instruction. Beck et al. (2002) categorize words into three tiers based on where the words are found and where they are best learned. They give teaching priority to Tier Two words, words such as *ridiculous*,

incredible and *emotion*, because these words “are of high frequency for mature language users and are found across a variety of domains” (p. 8). They argue that most students already know Tier One words, basic words like *clock* and *baby*, and that Tier Three words, rare words specific to a subject area, can be taught on an as-needed basis. Tier Two words should be chosen based on their ability to be explained using words that the students already know (Beck et al., 2002). These guidelines can pose an instructional problem in diverse classrooms where students have differing vocabulary bases to draw upon (Lehr et al., 2004). English language learners, for example, may not yet have the English vocabularies that are needed to explain the more sophisticated Tier Two words.

Researchers view the level of challenge a word presents as an important consideration when choosing words. Biemiller (2004) recommends not choosing words that appear in Chall and Dale’s (1995) first 3,000 words from their readability assessment list in order to ensure vocabulary words are challenging. However, Biemiller also acknowledges that English language learners and students in Kindergarten or younger may need to focus on more familiar words. August et al. (2005) recommend ensuring that ELLs know the meaning of basic words, such as *butterfly*, *march*, or *uncle* that most native English speakers already know, before presenting more challenging words. Teaching these fundamental words should make sophisticated words more assessable to English language learners.

Researchers also suggest teachers choose words that are essential to understanding a specific text or concept, that are generally helpful for students to know, and that students are likely to come across with some regularity in their reading. There

are words in math, science and social studies books that students will need to understand in order to comprehend the content area being taught. Students also need to know both function words, words that give structure to a sentence, and content words, words that give text meaning. There are a limited number of function words and students often learn those through oral language, but there are limitless content words (Lehr et al., 2004). Therefore, content area words often need to be addressed on an as-they-are-encountered basis.

Which Books?

Literature suggests teachers should look for a variety of features when choosing books for vocabulary-based read-alouds. Student interest is an important consideration when making read-aloud book choices (Graves 2006; Hickman et al., 2004). When students are engaged and motivated about a topic, they are more likely to pay close attention to the book. Stories can also be chosen based on a thematic unit. Students have increased opportunities to deepen their understanding and vocabulary around a given topic when they read multiple books about the same theme (Hickman et al., 2004).

Read-aloud books should be fairly challenging for children in the lower achieving half of the class, with at least half the class not knowing a number of the words (Biemiller, 2004). Beck & McKeown (2001) agree that read-alouds should include challenging content and language. They believe texts should challenge students to construct meaning and struggle with new ideas. Research done by Elley (1989) indicates that read-alouds are more successful teaching new vocabulary when the books allow

multiple exposures to the target words, the pictures match the words, and the context is helpful in understanding meaning.

Teachers should also choose books that are multicultural and representative of the children in the classroom. The content of texts should contain challenging ideas and allow children to make connections to their personal experiences and background (Conrad et al., 2004). Therefore, it is important that careful consideration be given to locate texts that engage and motivate students while presenting opportunities for effective vocabulary instruction.

Read-Alouds as a Tool for Teaching Vocabulary

As I explore the effectiveness of Text Talk for English language learners, it is important to examine the usefulness of read-alouds as a method for teaching vocabulary. Researchers have found reading aloud to children to be a valuable method for teaching new vocabulary words to students (Blachowicz et al., 2006). Preschool through elementary age students show increased vocabulary learning as a result of having books read aloud to them (Elley, 1989; Penno et al., 2002; Robbins & Ehri, 1994). Several studies have determined read-alouds can teach word meanings to children incidentally (Eller et al., 1988; Robbins & Ehri, 1994). However, children with limited initial vocabularies are less likely to learn words incidentally and require scaffolded read-alouds that are well planned (Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Senechal, Thomas, & Monker, 1995). Research shows considerable vocabulary gains take place when teachers involve students in discussions during and after the read-aloud, scaffold the lesson with added information, and prompt the children to describe what is happening. (Whitehurst, Arnold,

Epstein, Angell, Smith, & Fischel, 1994; Whitehurst, Zevenberg, Crone, Schultz, Velting, & Fischel, 1999). Storybooks offer meaningful contexts for students to hear rich language they rarely heard in daily speech (Beck et al., 2002; Coyne, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2004). Read-alouds are an especially valuable instructional strategy in the lower elementary grades because many children are unable to read a book on their own (Beck et al., 2002). Storybook read-alouds can help students build their listening comprehension, oral expression, content and vocabulary knowledge (Hickman et al, 2004). Rich instruction during read-alouds in school helps to level the vocabulary playing field for students who may not have the opportunity to have books read to them at home (Beck & McKeown, 2007).

Researchers indicate certain features should be included as part of a read-aloud experience to make vocabulary instruction more effective. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, teachers need to tap into children's background knowledge of words and ideas in the story to aid vocabulary growth and story comprehension (Lehr et al., 2004). Word meanings should be reinforced using a variety of contexts (Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Beck et al., 2002). For example, the basic instructional sequence of Text Talk involves providing examples of how new vocabulary words are used in the story, but also using student-friendly definitions to generate other ideas of other ways the words might be used in sentence (Beck et al., 2002). Effective read-aloud instruction should allow children to analyze words by comparing and contrasting them and connecting words to known concepts (Biemiller, 2004; Beck et al., 2002). Vocabulary words should be represented

phonologically and orthographically, so children can successfully place the words in their memory (Juel & Deffes, 2004).

In addition, researchers point out the importance of teacher-student conversation during and after the read-aloud. It is important that teachers involve children in analytical talk about the book because it supports students' awareness of new and uncommon vocabulary words (Dickenson & Smith, 1994). Beck and McKeown (2001) also emphasize the importance of giving students opportunities to experience grappling with decontextualized language, concepts and ideas outside their current experience. There are obviously a number of issues to consider as teachers work to make their read-alouds an effective vocabulary teaching method.

ELLs and Read-Alouds

Several factors stand out as important when examining the research done on the effectiveness of read-alouds in teaching vocabulary to English language learners. A study by Collins (2005) found that the most important factors for vocabulary acquisition include the initial English receptive and productive level, how often children were read to at home, and rich explanation of the target words being learned. A study of 70 preschoolers learning English as a second language revealed the aforementioned independent factors that contribute to target vocabulary acquisition through storybook read-alouds.

A study done by Deffes-Silverman (2007) found that a ten-step multidimensional vocabulary program was a successful intervention for kindergarten English language learners and English-only students. She based the ten steps on recommendations of well-

known vocabulary researchers (Beck et al., 2002; Biemiller, 2004; Nagy & Scott, 2000), research-based vocabulary intervention curricula (Juel & Deffes, 2004; Silverman, 2005), and methods developed to work with English language learners (Gersten & Baker, 2000; Gersten & Geva, 2003). According to Deffes-Silverman (2007), the intervention incorporated the following research-based considerations:

- (1) Introduction of words through the rich context of authentic children's literature;
- (2) clear, child-friendly definitions and explanations of target words;
- (3) questions and prompts to help children think critically about the meaning of words;
- (4) examples of how words are used in other contexts;
- (5) opportunities for children to act out the meaning of words when applicable;
- (6) visual aids illustrating the meaning of words in authentic contexts other than the book in which the word was introduced;
- (7) encouragement for children to pronounce the words;
- (8) guidance for children to notice the spelling of target words;
- (9) opportunities for children to compare and contrast words; and
- (10) repetition and reinforcement of the target words (p.370-371).

Deffes-Silverman found that after 14 weeks of instruction ELLs learned new vocabulary words as fast, or faster than English-only students. Even though the English-only students knew more target words than the ELLs prior to the intervention, there was no disparity between the knowledge of target words immediately after the intervention or six weeks later. Both the oral and picture-based vocabulary assessment indicated ELLs

made more vocabulary gains than the English-only students. There was also evidence that ELLs can achieve faster rates of growth in vocabulary than English only students. The studies done by Collins and Deffes-Silverman provide helpful insight for teachers looking for ways to make read-alouds more effective in developing vocabulary for English language learners.

Research on Text Talk

Beck & McKeown (2007) researched Text Talk's impact on vocabulary acquisition on kindergarten and first graders in a "low-achieving elementary school" (p.251). The first study compared the number of sophisticated Tier Two words learned by students receiving Text Talk instruction and students not receiving instruction, using a picture-based pretest and posttest similar to the Peabody Picture Vocabulary (PPVT). Text Talk incorporates rich instruction, which is defined as "...explaining word meanings in student-friendly language, providing multiple examples and multiple contexts, and requiring students to process words deeply by identifying and explaining appropriate and inappropriate uses and situations and creating multiple contexts" (Beck & McKeown, 2007, p.254). The participants were 98 African-American children, 82% of whom qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. Students receiving Text Talk instruction showed higher vocabulary gains than the control group. Kindergartners in the experimental group made 20.82% pretest-posttest gains with the control group making 4.7% gains. First graders in the instructed group made 16.55% gains with the control group making 7.77% gains. Beck & McKeown concluded that it is possible for young

children to learn sophisticated vocabulary words. Their second study followed up on the findings of the first study to look at whether or not more instruction of target words over a longer period of time increased vocabulary learning. The participants in this study were from a different school than the first study, but it was in the same small urban district. Seventy-six African-American kindergartners and first graders participated in this study, 81% of whom qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. Their first intervention called “Rich Instruction,” with an average of 6.6 minutes of instruction per word, was compared to the intervention they called “More Rich Instruction,” with an average of 27.6 instructional minutes per word. The additional minutes were a result of opportunities to encounter the word more often and of time to review. Picture and verbal assessments were used to measure results and showed kindergartners and first graders gained about twice as much vocabulary with “More Rich Instruction.” They concluded that more instructional time delivers better results (Beck & McKeown, 2007).

Gap in Research

Research done by Beck & McKeown suggests that Text Talk works in teaching sophisticated vocabulary words to African-American kindergarten and first grade students from low-performing schools (2007). In *Text Talk: A Summary of Research*, Moses (2005) claims, “Implementing Text Talk in early elementary classrooms has great potential for addressing the disparities in language abilities among young children by helping close the vocabulary gap, and preparing all children for reading success” (p.14). I wonder whether or not English language learners are included in that statement and whether or not the research takes all of their needs into consideration. I will make

modifications to Text Talk based on researched ELL instructional strategies and determine to what extent those modifications help Language Academy students learn Tier Two target vocabulary words. My research will attempt to fill a gap in research by providing insights into the following questions: Do English language learners learn vocabulary through Text Talk? If not, what adaptations need to be made for English language learners? If so, could vocabulary acquisition be improved by making adaptations for ELLs?

Review and Preview

In this chapter I looked specifically at what research says are effective instructional methods for teaching vocabulary to English language learners. I provided an overview of what researchers say about choosing books and words for vocabulary instruction. I examined studies done on read-alouds with a vocabulary-based focus and some that looked at the specific need of ELLs and vocabulary acquisition. I discussed the results of studies completed on Text Talk's effectiveness in teaching sophisticated vocabulary to primary-grade children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. I identified the gap in research and presented my research questions. In the next chapter I will address the methods I will use in my own research.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to explore the effectiveness of Text Talk as a vocabulary teaching method for English language learners. In this study I explore the following questions: Do English language learners learn vocabulary through Text Talk? If not, what adaptations need to be made for English language learners? If so, could vocabulary acquisition be improved by making adaptations for ELLs?

I used classroom research as the method for my study. I used a vocabulary assessment that allowed me to measure the students' comprehension level of the target vocabulary words. In addition, I videotaped the Text Talk lessons in order to observe the Language Academy students' engagement level during the read-aloud portion of the week long lessons.

This study aimed to provide insight into Text Talk's effectiveness in teaching sophisticated Tier Two vocabulary to English language learners. After I determined its effectiveness with no adaptations, I adapted the lessons to include research-based instructional strategies for ELLs to see what impact they have on the students' ability to learn the Text Talk vocabulary words.

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter describes the methodologies used in this study. First, the rationale and description of the research design is presented along with a description of the qualitative paradigm. Second, the data collection protocols are presented and the

procedure involved is described. Third, the method used for data analysis is described and the verification of data is examined. Finally, the ethical considerations for this study are presented.

Qualitative Research Paradigm

My research used the model of a basic or generic qualitative study. This type of study involves describing, interpreting and understanding a situation, as well as looking for patterns or themes. The findings combine description and analysis that use ideas from a study's theoretical frameworks (Merriam, 1998).

My research question was best suited for a qualitative study because it focused on a holistic view of Text Talk as a vocabulary method for ELLs. My role as researcher was interdependent with my role as a teacher. The research design was flexible and emergent as the study evolved and the data I gathered was analyzed through interpretation and categorization. My study involved a small number of participants chosen for a specific purpose. The purpose of my study was to interpret and contextualize, which allowed me to use descriptive language in sharing my results. These characteristics made my study best suited for qualitative research (McKay, 2006).

Classroom Research

My study took place in the context of classroom research. Classroom research examines what actually occurs in genuine classrooms settings specifically designed for the purposes of teaching and learning (Nunan, 1992). It involves the researcher becoming informed about an issue for investigation, collecting and analyzing classroom data. Direct observation, surveys through interviews or questionnaires, and self-report

procedures are common ways of gathering data in classroom research. Test data is also sometimes collected to determine whether or not something has been successfully taught. As a classroom researcher, I used descriptive approach to investigate a variety of things, including classroom processes, instruction and interactions (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). Classroom research was an appropriate context for my study because I investigated and described the effectiveness of a technique for teaching vocabulary that I used in my classroom.

Data Collection

Participants

My research was done with ten second-grade, beginning English language learners. They were initially assessed by the school district student placement office and qualified as Language Academy students because they scored a level one on the Language Assessment Scale when they were exiting Kindergarten or when they enrolled in the school district. Scoring a level one means that the student spoke fewer than 300 words in English at the time the test was administered. Nine of the students in my study were Hmong speakers and one of the students was a Somali speaker. Six of the students were newcomers to the United States within the last year and four of the students were born in the United States. All of the students in my study came from the same second-grade classroom.

Location/Setting

My study took place in a second grade Language Academy classroom in an urban school district in the Midwest. Language Academy classrooms, as they are called in my

district, are intended for newcomer students in first through sixth grade. ESL teachers, mainstream teachers, and bilingual education assistants collaborate to provide differentiated instruction to all of the students as they work on the same academic content. Language development lessons and opportunities to build background knowledge are integrated throughout the day in all content areas. All of the students remain in the mainstream classroom for all academic areas so that they do not miss instruction. Language Academy students are usually in the program for two years before they exit into the regular ELL program. These students continue to receive service or are monitored by ESL staff as part of an inclusion model (St. Paul Public Schools, 2006). The school that I teach in has been a Language Academy site for the last six years.

Data Collection Technique 1: Vocabulary Assessment

I field tested a vocabulary assessment found in the review section of the Text Talk program sold by Scholastic Books to assess its effectiveness as a pretest and posttest for ELLs. This field test was done on group of third-grade ELL students. There were six questions which assessed students' understanding of the six target vocabulary words used in a given Text Talk lesson. Each question presented a definition of one of the target words and offered two of the six target vocabulary words as possible matches. An example of this type of question from the Text Talk book *Ruby the Copycat* asks, "Which word means read something out loud, *recited* or *murmured*?" (Beck & McKeown, 2005b, p.21). In this case, *recited* and *murmured* are two of the six target vocabulary words presented as part of that book's Text Talk lesson. Students were asked to circle one of the two words or "I do not know" to indicate their understanding of the given

definition. I included “I do not know” as a possible answer in an effort to minimize the chances that students will guess the correct answer. I discussed the importance of honestly answering the question with that answer if students truly do not know the meaning of a given word. This assessment was read aloud to students so that it accurately measured student understanding of target vocabulary words and not their ability to read. The challenge in using multiple-choice tests as a vocabulary assessment can be that students may be able to guess the right answer by chance or they may be distracted by incorrect choices. The benefit to multiple choice tests is that teachers can purposely make them more or less difficult, depending on the level of word knowledge they want to assess (Beck et al., 2002). The results of the field test did not indicate problems with the multiple choice assessment, so I did not field test a picture-based assessment. The challenge with this type of assessment is finding pictures that accurately depict sophisticated words like *coincidence* and *sensitive*. I chose to field test assessments that I could deliver to a group of children at the same time, as opposed to one-on-one, because I want to maximize instruction time.

I did not use the final assessment suggested in the Text Talk program sold by Scholastic Books because it is not appropriate for English language learners. That assessment offers both sentences that make sense and sentences that do not make sense. Students are asked to mark *yes* or *no* to indicate whether or not they think a given sentence makes sense. That type of assessment is inappropriate for ELLs because many of them have not established the language background necessary to make judgments about whether or not a sentence is nonsensical.

Data Collection Technique 2: Observation

Observation is used as a research tool when it is done with a purpose, deliberate planning, systematic recording, and subjected to validity and reliability checks and controls (Kiddler, 1981, p.264 as cited in Merriam, 1998). The purpose of my research was to examine Language Academy students' level of engagement during Text Talk lessons. I used a video camera as my observation tool to record students during four lessons. The challenge with this type of observation was that the camera's presence can impact how students behave, which may make the conditions for the study less natural (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). In an effort to minimize that effect, I set up the video camera in an unobtrusive place. I specifically looked for the level of "behavioral engagement" as presented in the rubric in Lutz et al., 2006. I chose to examine behavioral engagement over affective, cognitive or social engagement because it is the best match for the types of observable activities students engage in during a Text Talk lesson. The rubric presents four levels of behavioral engagement:

1. Distracted by something unrelated to task; head completely down (i.e. not participating in task); teacher has to tell student to get to work, prolonged yawn.
2. Hard to judge whether student is truly behaviorally engaged; not off task, but does not appear particularly involved; eyes may or not be on teacher, but does not seem to really be following discussion or actively engaged in activity; may be slouching.

3. Clearly on task, as suggested by eye movement and posture toward speaker; raising hand (perhaps just briefly); writing; speaking; clearly listening (suggesting that student is attentive at least behaviorally).
4. Waving hand; hand “shoots” into air to answer question; making noises that suggest great enthusiasm and eagerness to participate; otherwise seems “super-engaged” (Lutz et al. 2006, p.17).

For the purposes of my research I considered levels three and four to be highly engaged. I coded the level of behavioral engagement on an estimated percentage basis by stopping the video every three minutes to calculate the percentage of students who fall into the different levels throughout the lesson. Percentage-based estimates of on-task behavior is a common method for classroom observation research (Dolezal, et al., 2003, as cited in Lutz et al., 2006). I asked another educator to watch the tapes with me and use the same rubric to rate the level of behavioral engagement in order to ensure validity and reliability.

Text Talk lessons are designed to be taught over a week-long period. The first two days are the read-aloud portion of the lesson in which students answer questions about the content and vocabulary in the book. I videotaped those first two days of each week-long lesson, which resulted in eight observations across a total of four weeks. I watched the videotaped lessons, analyzed the data and decided on appropriate adaptations given what I observed. Finally, I videotaped two adapted Text Talk lessons over a period of another two weeks. I coded and analyzed the student engagement levels students for all of the videotaped lessons.

Procedure

Participants

All of the participants for this study were chosen based on their enrollment in the second grade Language Academy classroom at my school. The participants were observed and assessed in their second-grade classroom setting. They were carefully observed over the course of four Text Talk lessons and were given a vocabulary assessment before and after each week-long lesson to determine the amount of vocabulary acquired.

Pilot Study

I field tested the vocabulary assessment tools described above in the data collection section to see which works best for second grade Language Academy students. The field test was done with a group of ELL third graders before the actual study began. I also practiced taking notes from videotaped lessons using a coding system and then made appropriate changes to the codes as necessary.

Book and Word Selection

I chose the books and target vocabulary words from the second grade list provided in Beck and McKeown's Text Talk program sold by Scholastic Books. This ensured the books were grade-level appropriate and that the words are defined as Tier Two words suitable for a Text Talk lesson.

Pretest and Posttest

I administered a pretest to the participants the week prior to the Text Talk lesson.

I designed this test based on the vocabulary review section of the Text Talk lessons. I administered the posttest on the last day of the week-long Text Talk lesson. The posttest was identical to the pretest.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the results of the vocabulary assessment by assigning one point for each correct answer. I compared the individual pretest scores to the posttest scores to determine the number of target vocabulary words learned by each individual student. I also combined the individual scores to look for the average number of target vocabulary words learned by the group of students as a whole. I analyzed these results to conclude whether or not Language Academy students as a whole appear to be learning vocabulary words from Text Talk.

I analyze the coded data from the first two lesson observations and compared it with the coded data from the two adapted-lesson observations. I marked the number of students who fell into levels three and four and calculate an average percentage of highly engaged students based on those numbers. I then compared the average percentage of highly engaged students in the lessons without adaptations to the average percentage of highly engaged students in the adapted lessons. This comparison provided information about the effectiveness of the adaptations on the students' engagement level during the read-aloud part of the Text Talk lesson. I asked a peer to watch the videotape to look for the same behaviors and will use the same coding system. This enhanced the reliability of the study.

Verification of Data

I worked to ensure internal validity by using two methods of data collection: observation and vocabulary assessments. I asked a peer to examine and review the vocabulary assessments, as well as watch the videotaped observations and code for the same categories I used. I acknowledge a research bias in that I believe Text Talk is a worthwhile vocabulary teaching tool for students or I would not have studied the best way to adapt it.

Ethics

This study employs several safeguards to protect informant's rights. I shared the research objectives with the participants and I obtained written permission /informed consent from the participants' parents or legal guardians. In addition, I obtained permission from Hamline University and St. Paul Public Schools in regard to the human subject review policies. Participant's identities were protected and remain anonymous.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the methods used in my study of the effectiveness of Text Talk in teaching vocabulary words to English language learners. The next chapter describes in detail the Text Talk lessons used in the study. It also presents the results of the vocabulary assessments and student engagement observations.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The focus of my study was to determine whether or not ELLs learned vocabulary words using Text Talk and if they learned more of the target vocabulary words when research-based accommodations are made for ELL students. I used pretests and posttests to measure how many vocabulary words students learned using the Text Talk lessons as they were originally written in comparison with how many they learned using accommodations. I also used videotaped observations to measure the level of behavioral student engagement in the original lessons and the accommodated lessons. I will first present an overview of the two week-long lessons taught with the original Text Talk curriculum. I will then explain the accommodations I made to the Text Talk lessons in the following two week-long lessons. Finally, I will present the results of the pretests and posttests as well as the results of student engagement level in the videotaped observations.

Lesson Plans

The lessons in the Text Talk Professional Guide lay out a week-long, five-session curriculum for building comprehension skills and learning six target vocabulary words from a trade book that is read aloud to the class. I used lessons from the Text Talk Professional Guide level B (Beck & McKeown, 2005a), which is written for grades one and two and Text Talk Professional Guide level C (Beck & McKeown, 2005b), which was written for grade two and three. I chose to use stories that the students had not

already heard presented thought Text Talk. I used *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel* (Burton, 1939) and *The Wolf* (Bloom, 1999) as the read-aloud stories I taught without adaptations. The Text Talk guides break the read-aloud lessons into five sessions, which fits into a five day instructional week. Sessions one and two focus on developing language and comprehension through the read aloud. Sessions three and four introduce and develop the target vocabulary words. Session five integrates vocabulary and comprehension by returning to the read aloud to review and assess the words.

I gave a pretest the morning of the session one in order to determine which of the target vocabulary words the students already knew and which ones they needed to learn. I gave the tests to the entire class of second graders, but only collected scores from my ten ELLs for research purposes. I followed the Text Talk guide's outline of reading and discussing the book over a two-day period. I used the scripted questions and clarification notes provided in the Text Talk curriculum. These notes stick onto specific pages of the read-aloud book and provide high-level, comprehension questions and opportunities to recap the story at certain points. I followed the model provided in the accompanying CD instructional video, which showed a teacher following the script and asking questions to the whole class without opportunities for students to turn and talk about the answers. Sessions three and four each introduced three of the six target vocabulary words with explanations of how the word was used in the story and opportunities for the class to say the word out loud. For example, the script said "A cellar is a room underneath a building. Because a cellar is underground, it is usually dark inside. Let's say the word that means the room underneath the ground." (Beck, &

McKeown, 2005a, p.106). This was followed by an exchange in which I provided an example and students said the target vocabulary word only if it made sense in the context of the example. In the *cellar* example, I said, “I’m going to name some things, and if you think it is something that might be kept in a cellar, say ‘cellar’. If not, don’t say anything (Beck & McKeown, 2005, p.106). I then read four examples and gave the class a chance to respond as a group. I then used the target word in a sentence and asked the students to say the word one final time. For example, “What’s the word that means the room underneath the ground?” (Beck & McKeown, 2005, p.106). Session five was a review of the vocabulary words and a final connection to the book. For example, “Mike Mulligan and May Anne dug holes for *cellars* when they worked in the big cities. When else in the story did they dig a cellar?” (Beck & McKeown, 2005, p.106). I gave the post-test when we finished the review at the end of session five.

Lesson Adaptations

I adapted the Text Talk lessons using a variety of strategies that I hoped would provide ELL students easier access to the target words and more opportunities to use the words in context. I chose adaptations that I thought would be easy for mainstream teachers to incorporate into the lessons without too much additional work. The adaptations I used included using visual aids, activating prior knowledge and building background knowledge, and providing extra opportunities for review and reinforcement. Not all of the research-based, ELL adaptations that I outlined in my Literature Review made sense to incorporate into these Text Talk lessons. For example, I did not teach cognates because I did not have any Spanish-speaking students who would benefit from

it. I also did not use the Text Talk lesson time to ensure students know the meaning of basic words because that instruction happens throughout the year during differentiated-word study time in second grade. I chose not to adapt the comprehension questions and vocabulary explanations provided in the Text Talk curriculum notes. I also followed the basic format of the curriculum in that I read the book over the first two sessions, provided opportunities to work with the target vocabulary words in the next two sessions, and spent the fifth session reviewing before the assessment. I felt it was important to keep the comprehension questions, vocabulary definitions and basic format of the curriculum in place during the adapted lessons in order to keep the foundations of Text Talk in tact. I will now describe the adaptations in the order they were incorporated throughout the five sessions.

Use of Visual Aids

Prior to starting session one, I introduced three of six target vocabulary words by showing the students a large poster that contained the words with definitions written in bright colors and a matching visual image that represented the target words. When possible I used images from the read-aloud to support the students' understanding in the context of the book. For example, in the book *Amelia's Road* (Altman, 1993), one of the vocabulary words was *sturdy* and it was used in the book to describe a tree. In that case, I used the image of the tree to show the word *sturdy* on the poster. In other cases, images were difficult to find and required additional explanation because of the abstract nature of the word. An example of this was the word *associate*, which I showed with a soccer team with linked arms wearing matching uniforms. I kept the poster containing

the target words, definitions and matching images up on the wall so that the children could see it during the read-aloud. Prior to session two, I completed the poster by adding the remaining three vocabulary words that the students would hear in the second half of the book. This poster remained up in the classroom for the rest of the week and only came down when it was time for the posttest at the end of session five.

Activate Prior Knowledge and Build Background Knowledge

I chose to have the students create meaningful actions as a strategy to activate prior knowledge for students with some understanding of the target word and build background knowledge for students with no experience with the word. I chose meaningful actions as a strategy because I work at an arts-infused school that often uses drama help students build understanding in many academic areas. Meaningful actions as I used them are different from the language acquisition approach of Total Physical Response. In TPR teachers demonstrate actions associated with commands, ask students to copy the action, and gradually remove the model so that the students learn to act out the command on their own (Herrell & Jordan, 2004). I asked students to work together to brainstorm actions that matched the target vocabulary word meaning. Students used both the visual aids and the opportunity to turn and talk to a partner as supports in coming up with their ideas for meaningful actions. The class chose an action that a majority agreed upon, and then practiced using it while saying the word and definition. The students were asked to listen carefully for the target words during the read-aloud and then to show the action when they heard the word being used. I read the book *Amelia's Road* for the first adapted lesson and the book *Everybody Cooks Rice* (Dooley, N. 1991) for the second

adapted lesson. The class created six different meaningful actions to match the six vocabulary words presented in each book.

In the book *Amelia's Road*, we created actions for the words *labored*, *sturdy* and *cherished*, *accidental*, *associate* and *permanent*. We acted out the word *labored* by pretending to pull weeds out of a field like they did in the book and the word *sturdy* by flexing our muscles in a frozen pose. We showed the word *cherished* by pretending to hold a prized possession and give it a tight hug and the word *accidental* by shrugging our shoulders. The class chose to act out the word *associate* by linking our index fingers together and the word *permanent* by making a triangular mountain shape with our hands.

In the book *Everybody Cooks Rice*, we created actions for the words *appetizing*, *grumbling*, *gulped*, *community*, *diversity*, and *boarder*. We acted out the word *appetizing* by rubbing our stomachs and licking our lips. The class chose to add the sound of a low growl while making a disgruntled face to act out the word *grumbling*. We acted out the word *gulped* by pretending to drink something quickly and noisily. We acted out *community* by holding our arms open and the word *diversity* by putting our hands up to show one another all the different colors. The class chose a knocking on a door motion to associate with the word *boarder*.

During sessions three and four we continued to activate prior knowledge and build background knowledge through a discussion of our experiences with the target vocabulary words. We discussed three target vocabulary words during session three and three vocabulary words during session four. I used the poster from the first two sessions as a visual aid in prompting our discussion. I asked them to echo me as I said the word

and definition from the poster. Then I asked them to show me the matching action which they had chosen to associate with that word and had practiced in sessions one and two. After they successfully showed me the action, I asked them to turn and talk to someone sitting near them about how they could use that target word in a sentence. I encouraged them to think back to the read-aloud and about their own experiences when coming up with a sentence. This was an attempt to both activate prior knowledge for some students and build background knowledge for other students. Then, we came back together as a whole class and shared some of our sentences out loud. This gave students another opportunity to hear how the target words were used in context. I chose one sentence to write on the board and asked students to write that sentence on a paper I gave them, which had the target vocabulary words with definitions already written on it. As they were copying the sentence down, we continued the whole class discussion and looked for whole class connections to the target vocabulary words. For example, we discussed how the path in the snow on the way to recess was like an *accidental* road like the one we heard about in *Amelia's Road* (Altman, 1993). We also talked about when a second grader loses a tooth, a *permanent* tooth comes in. This discussion helped keep all students focused as some students took a longer time than others when writing the sentence down on their paper.

Review and Reinforcement

I included several opportunities for students to review and reinforce the new vocabulary words throughout the five sessions. Many of these opportunities were mentioned in the sections above, but I will highlight them in this section. The original

Text Talk lessons did not give the students an opportunity to turn and talk to a neighbor about the questions asked during the read-aloud. This is a routine adaptation that my mainstream teaching partner and I use when teaching lessons. I did not originally plan on including turning and talking as adaptation to the lessons, but I chose to add it because our students were comfortable using it as a natural part of their learning. This opportunity to discuss answers with a partner during the adapted lessons provided students a chance to use the vocabulary words more often than they did in the original lessons. In doing so, they were reinforcing the words and information they had just heard in the story. I also started each of the adapted sessions with a review of the actions assigned to the words at the beginning of the week. The sentences we wrote during sessions three and four provided students with a chance to bring home a review sheet that included words, definitions and a sentence using the words in context. Finally, I adapted session five to include a slightly longer opportunity to review the words before taking the assessment. In this session, the students quizzed each other in partnerships by saying a definition or showing an action and having their partner tell them the word they were describing. These adapted lessons which included opportunities for review and reinforcement took approximately eight more minutes than the lessons without adaptations.

Test Results

Vocabulary Assessments

The results of the vocabulary assessment for each of the lessons are reported below. There were six target vocabulary words in each of the four read aloud books.

The results indicate that the adapted lessons seem to have produced a higher level of total vocabulary words learned than the lessons without adaptations.

Table 4.1:

Lessons With No Adaptations: Mike Mulligan and the Steam Shovel

Students	Pretest Known Words	Posttest Known Words	Total Words Learned
Student 1	2	5	3
Student 2	4	5	1
Student 3	3	6	3
Student 4	2	3	1
Student 5	0	3	3
Student 6	0	0	0
Student 7	0	0	0
Student 8	2	2	0
Student 9	2	4	2
Student 10	3	4	1
Average number of words learned			1.4

Table 4.2:

Lessons With No Adaptations: Wolf

Students	Pretest Known Words	Posttest Known Words	Total Words Learned
Student 1	2	2	0
Student 2	5	3	2
Student 3	3	3	0
Student 4	2	2	0
Student 5	4	3	-1
Student 6	2	1	-1
Student 7	0	0	0
Student 8	3	4	1
Student 9	3	3	0
Student 10	2	3	1
Average number of words learned			.2

Table 4.3:

Lessons With Adaptations: Amelia's Road

Students	Pretest Known Words	Posttest Known Words	Total Words Learned
Student 1	2	6	4
Student 2	3	4	1
Student 3	3	6	3
Student 4	2	5	3
Student 5	3	6	3
Student 6	0	5	5
Student 7	0	2	2
Student 8	3	5	2
Student 9	2	5	3
Student 10	2	6	4
Average number of words learned			3

Table 4.4:

Lessons With Adaptations: Everybody Cooks Rice

Students	Pretest Known Words	Posttest Known Words	Total Words Learned
Student 1	4	6	2
Student 2	2	6	4
Student 3	4	6	2
Student 4	4	5	1
Student 5	4	6	2
Student 6	4	5	1
Student 7	4	5	1
Student 8	3	6	3
Student 9	2	6	4
Student 10	0	6	6
Average number of words learned			2.6

The two week-long Text Talk lessons without adaptations resulted in an average gain of 1.4 vocabulary words and .2 vocabulary words. The total average of vocabulary words learned during lessons without adaptations is .8 vocabulary words. The two week-long adapted Text Talk lessons resulted in an average gain of 3 vocabulary words and 2.6 vocabulary words. The total average of vocabulary words learned during adapted lessons is 2.8 vocabulary words. Therefore, the adapted lessons seem to have more than doubled the average number of vocabulary words learned by English Language Learners.

Student Engagement Observations

I videotaped the read-aloud portion of sessions one and two for each of the Text Talk lessons. Two weeks after the lessons, I watched the tape and stopped it every three minutes to rank the students on a four point scale that measured student engagement (see appendix). The rubric I used is shown below:

1. Distracted by something unrelated to task; head completely down (i.e. not participating in task); teacher has to tell student to get to work, prolonged yawn.
2. Hard to judge whether student is truly behaviorally engaged; not off task, but does not appear particularly involved; eyes may or not be on teacher, but does not seem to really be following discussion or actively engaged in activity; may be slouching.
3. Clearly on task, as suggested by eye movement and posture toward speaker; raising hand (perhaps just briefly); writing; speaking; clearly listening (suggesting that student is attentive at least behaviorally).

4. Waving hand; hand “shoots” into air to answer question; making noises that suggest great enthusiasm and eagerness to participate; otherwise seems “super-engaged” (Lutz et al. 2006, p.17).

For purposes of my research, I decided that levels one and two would be designated a low level of engagement, while levels three and four would be designated high levels of engagement. I asked another educator to review and score the tapes using the same four point scale. We then compared our results and found minor differences on some of our scores. We queued up the parts of the tape where there were differences in scores, watched them together and came up with a score that we both agree upon. The results of the student engagement observation are presented in the following tables.

Table 4.5:

Student Engagement During Text Talk Lessons With No Adaptations

Minutes Into The Lesson	Number of Students at Each Level of Engagement				% Students Highly Engaged
	Low Engagement		High Engagement		
	Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four	
<i>Mike Mulligan Lesson 1</i>					
:03	2	1	7	0	70%
:06	1	3	6	0	60%
:09	2	2	6	0	60%
<i>Mike Mulligan Lesson 2</i>					
:03	4	2	4	0	40%
:06	1	2	7	0	70%
:09	2	3	5	0	50%
:12	3	5	2	0	20%
<i>Wolf Lesson 1</i>					
:03	0	3	7	0	70%
:06	2	8	0	0	0%
<i>Wolf Lesson 2</i>					
:03	4	3	3	0	30%
:06	0	1	9	0	90%
Average % of highly engaged students during lessons without adaptations					51%

Table 4.6:

Student Engagement During Text Talk Lessons With Adaptations

Minutes Into The Lesson	Number of Students at Each Level of Engagement				% Students Highly Engaged
	Low Engagement		High Engagement		
	Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four	
<i>Amelia's Road Lesson 1</i>					
:03	0	3	2	5	70%
:06	0	3	0	7	70%
:09	0	2	8	0	80%
:12	0	0	0	10	10%
<i>Amelia's Road Lesson 2</i>					
:03	0	1	6	3	90%
:06	2	1	6	1	70%
:09	2	3	5	0	50%
<i>Everybody Cooks Rice Lesson 1</i>					
:03	0	2	7	1	80%
:06	2	4	4	0	40%
:09	1	0	6	3	90%
<i>Everybody Cooks Rice Lesson 2</i>					
:03	1	0	8	1	90%
:06	2	0	8	0	80%
Average % of highly engaged students during lessons with adaptations					76%

More students were highly engaged throughout the adapted lessons than the lessons without adaptations. On average 51% of the students were highly engaged during the lessons without adaptations, while 76% of the students were highly engaged during the adapted lessons. That is an increase of 25 percentage points. The adapted lessons appear to be more successful in keeping students highly engaged.

In conclusion, this chapter explained the results of the vocabulary pretests and posttests, as well as the observation of student engagement. My analysis showed that the adapted lessons seemed to result in English Language Learners learning more than twice as many vocabulary words than they did in the lessons without adaptations. Likewise, the adapted lessons seemed to have kept English Language Learners engaged at a higher level than the lessons without adaptations.

Chapter five will present the major findings of my study and explore implications and limitations of this study. It will also present recommendations for future research and describe how the results will be communicated and used.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

This study was designed to explore the effectiveness of Text Talk as a vocabulary teaching method for ELLs and the impact adaptations had on the number of vocabulary words learned and the level of student engagement. In the last chapter I presented the results of the vocabulary assessments and student engagement observations. In this chapter, I will focus on the major finding of my research, the implications of these findings for other educators, the limitations of the study, areas for further research, and how the results of this research will be communicated.

Major Findings

Students Learned More Vocabulary Words

The adaptations I made to the lessons seemed to increase the average number of target vocabulary words learned by ELL students. The students seem to have learned more than twice as many words when the Text Talk lessons included adaptations. I was not surprised by this finding because it has been my experience as an ELL teacher that adaptations generally make grade level material more accessible for ELLs. While it is not clear which of the adaptations made the biggest difference in test scores, the meaningful actions we used during the lessons were by far the most popular adaptation.

I intentionally chose adaptations that I hoped mainstream and ELL teachers could make without much additional effort. This did not mean, however, that these lessons do not take some additional time. Finding images to match the sophisticated vocabulary

words presented in Text Talk took time because there were no ready images for words like *associate*. I used the read-aloud book and the internet to find images that seemed to make sense as a visual image that represented the words in the lesson. The process of making the poster with vocabulary words, definitions and images needs to be completed once and then the poster could be used in subsequent lessons.

Students Were More Engaged

The observation scale indicated students seem to be more engaged during the adapted Text Talk lessons. This did not surprise me because the first lessons I taught without adaptations made me acutely aware of how easy it was for the ELL students to sit quietly and disengage from lessons. Not a single ELL raised his or her hand in the lessons without adaptations when questions were addressed to the whole group. While I knew prior to starting my research that the English Language Learners in the classroom did not participate in class discussions as much as their native English-speaking classmates, I was not aware that they were not participating at all. It struck me how easy it is to overlook the level of ELL participation in the inclusive classroom where newcomer ELL students learn next to native English-speaking children all day.

The seating arrangement for my videotaped observations required that the newcomer ELLs sit together so that the video camera could zoom in on them during the read aloud. This clustered seating arrangement was different from the usual classroom seating arrangement in which ELL and native English speakers sit together. This new seating arrangement made me notice the lack of engagement on the part of the ELLs in a way I had not noticed when all of the students were mixed together.

I believe the adaptation of turning and talking to a partner was the most influential in increasing the engagement level of ELLs during the adapted lessons. Many of the ELLs were willing to raise their hands when they had a chance to practice their answer with a partner before answering out loud to the whole class. Creating opportunities for students to talk to each other on a one-on-one basis allows students to engage on a small scale and gives them the courage to share their idea with the whole class after they have practiced with their idea with a partner. My hope is that teachers will make the time for each of the adaptations before and during the Text Talk lessons so that ELLs can maximize their learning potential.

Vocabulary Assessment Challenges

It is incredibly difficult to create vocabulary tests that truly measure what words students know and don't know. I was aware of this challenge going into my research, but became increasingly aware of it as I administered the pretests and posttests for the Text Talk lessons. I considered several options before choosing the multiple-choice format that I read aloud to students. A picture-based vocabulary test, for example, seemed unfair in that the interpretation of images would be too subjective given the sophisticated nature of the vocabulary words. Likewise, a verbal-based test which would ask students what a given vocabulary word meant would be unfair for students with limited English because they may not yet have the English proficiency necessary to represent accurately what they comprehend. Similarly, a test which would ask students to read on their own would test a student's reading ability as much or more than a student's vocabulary.

I chose to use the multiple-choice test, which asked students to circle the word that matched the definition I read or to circle “I don’t know” if they were not sure. While I knew it was an imperfect test because students had a one-in-three chance of guessing the right answer, the field test I did before starting my research indicated that guessing would not be a significant problem as long as students felt comfortable being honest in choosing “I don’t know” as an answer. The results of the actual research indicate, however, some of the students were likely guessing because their posttest scores in the lessons without adaptations were actually lower than their pretest scores. It is hard to imagine that students knew fewer vocabulary words after spending a week studying about them than they did on the day of the pretest. I believe student guessing likely impacted the negative vocabulary growth scores for the two students in the *Wolf* posttest results.

The other challenge in assessing vocabulary words is the lack of agreement among researchers about how long a student must remember the meaning of a word to have learned a word. In my research, I gave a posttest on the fifth day of a week-long lesson. It is possible that students could memorize the meaning just for the test and then forget it the next week. I considered administering a follow-up test a month later, but decided that time would be better spent teaching new vocabulary words. Teachers, therefore, have a difficult job in weighing the benefits of vocabulary assessment against the costs of losing instructional time.

Implications

My research has implications for ESL and mainstream teachers who use or are thinking of using Text Talk as a vocabulary teaching method for their students. Teachers

should be aware that including the adaptations for ELLs in the Text Talk lessons will likely increase the average number of target vocabulary words they will learn. In a more general sense, teachers should consider using the specific adaptations, including visual aids, activating prior knowledge and building background knowledge, and providing opportunities for review and reinforcement to help their ELL students succeed in learning new vocabulary words.

Teachers should also be aware that providing opportunities to turn and talk to each other about what is happening in the book will likely increase the level of student engagement. In addition, finding ways to incorporate meaningful actions into the lessons keeps students engaged while building background knowledge. Both of these adaptations are easy for teachers to add to lessons which contain new vocabulary words for ELL students.

Mainstream and ESL teachers must carefully consider how to assess students' vocabulary growth. As mentioned above, it is time consuming and difficult to find vocabulary tests that measure what words students know. Teachers should ask themselves several questions when considering vocabulary assessments: Is the test measuring vocabulary growth fairly or are there hidden assessments inside like reading, speaking or picture interpretation? How will I use pretests to determine what words I will teach as a whole group? Will I differentiate the vocabulary words that I teach certain students based on the results of the pretest? How will I minimize the chances that students will guess if I choose to use a multiple-choice test? How much time do I want to spend assessing vocabulary word growth in relationship to the amount of time I spend

teaching new vocabulary words? Teachers who give careful consideration to these questions will be better able to use vocabulary assessments as a tool for measuring student growth and driving student instruction.

Limitations

There are limitations to the study related to the small size and homogenous language background of my research-participant base. Only ten English language learners participated in the Text Talk research. Nine of the ten students spoke Hmong as their first language, which limits the generalizations one can make to other language backgrounds. My research was also limited in that the classroom conditions were not entirely natural. All of the English language learners sat together in a group for purposes of videotaping. This was not the natural setting for lessons in this classroom, but was necessary to be able to observe the English Language Learners engagement level. Allowing the students to choose where they sit during the read-aloud would provide a more realistic view of how the adaptations influenced their level of engagement.

Future Research

There are many opportunities for future research regarding the effectiveness of Text Talk as a vocabulary teaching method for English Language Learners. Future studies could be done that include a larger sample size or with students of other language backgrounds. Future research could also explore whether or not using different adaptations during Text Talk would have similar results to those in my research. For example, would teaching cognates be an effective adaptation if Spanish-speaking students participated in a Text Talk lesson? Another opportunity for research would be

looking at the effectiveness of Text Talk lessons for English Language Learners at different grade levels.

Communicating and Using Results

I intend to share the results of my research with other ELL and mainstream teachers at a school staff meeting. I also plan to share the results with the ELL coaches in my district. They may be able to use the results to help develop staff development for ELL and mainstream teachers focused on creating effective adaptations for Text Talk. Building vocabulary levels of ELL students should help improve reading comprehension levels and test scores. With increasing pressures put on schools to improve standardized test scores, district coaches are excited to share research-based lessons that raise scores for ELL students. I hope my research can be used to start a discussion on effective vocabulary lessons that work for all of our students.

Summary

I have learned a great deal in researching the effectiveness of Text Talk as a vocabulary teaching method for English Language Learners. I have affirmed the value of the adaptations I use to make lessons more accessible and to keep students engaged. I am also more deliberate in using strategies to make daily read-alouds into vocabulary building opportunities in which students interact with words in a meaningful way. My hope is that my own heightened awareness of adaptations and strategies will continue to enrich my own teaching and benefit the academic lives of all the students I teach.

APPENDIX A

Student Engagement Coding Worksheet

Student Engagement Coding Worksheet

	Number of Students at Each Level of Engagement				% Students Highly Engaged
	Low Engagement		High Engagement		
Minutes Into The Lesson	Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four	
Book One Lesson One					
:03					
:06					
:09					
Book One Lesson Two					
:03					
:06					
:09					
Book Two Lesson One					
:03					
:06					
:09					
Book Two Lesson Two					
:03					
:06					
:09					
		Average % of highly engaged students during lessons with adaptations			

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