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In spite of strong oral proficiency, many English language learners have a great deal of difficulty comprehending non-fiction texts. There are a variety of theories about why this is. This study examines one possible treatment, reading fluency practice, and its effect on reading comprehension in ELLs.

Six fourth grade English language learners participated in a reading fluency practice group. The students' comprehension was measured at four points during the twelve week study. Both non-standardized and standardized assessments were used.

The results showed that the fluency practice was minimally effective in helping the ELLs raise their levels of comprehension. This suggests that fluency practice is not the only missing piece in helping ELL comprehension. Instead, it should be included along with other critical elements of literacy instruction in a balanced program for ELLs. Additional thoughts and ideas about what those elements might include are discussed.

THE EFFECT OF READING FLUENCY PRACTICE ON OVERALL
COMPREHENSION OF NON-FICTION CONTENT-AREA TEXTS IN GRADE FOUR
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

By

Karn Michelle Schwartzhoff

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Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

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Committee:

Nina Mosser, Primary Advisor

Betsy Parrish, Secondary Advisor

Roberta Haugan, Peer Reader

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	11
Defining Reading Fluency.....	11
The Connection Between Reading Fluency and Reading Comprehension.....	12
Measuring Comprehension.....	14
Question Generation.....	15
Oral Retellings.....	17
Cloze Completion.....	17
Role of Reading Fluency in Second Language Literacy.....	18
Reading Fluency Practice in the ELL Classroom.....	22
Conclusion.....	25
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS.....	27
Research Paradigms.....	27
Participants.....	28
Selection Process/Criteria.....	28
Demographics of Selected Group.....	31
Classroom Description.....	33

Data Collection.....	33
Baseline Data.....	33
Intermediate Data.....	35
Final Data.....	36
Incidental Data.....	36
Data Analysis.....	37
The Treatment.....	38
Program Rationale.....	38
Program Description.....	40
Conclusion.....	41
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	42
Collected Data and Analysis.....	42
Screening and Baseline Data.....	42
Intermediate Data.....	45
Final Data.....	49
Incidental Data.....	52
Summary of Overall Growth and Notable Trends.....	54
Discussion Points.....	55
Potentially Confounding Influences.....	55
Positive Influences.....	57
Concluding Thoughts.....	58
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	60

Limitations of the Study.....61

Future Questions and Implications.....63

Communicating the Results.....65

Conclusions.....65

Appendix A: Retelling Rubric.....67

Appendix B: Sample Cloze Assessment.....69

Appendix C: Questioning Rubric.....72

Appendix D: Sample Blank Fluency Records.....74

REFERENCES.....77

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Summary of Student Demographics.....	31
Table 4.1 Winter MAP Reading Scores.....	43
Table 4.2 ACCESS Test Scores.....	44
Table 4.3 WEEK ONE Non-Standardized Measures of Comprehension Results.....	45
Table 4.4 WEEK FOUR Non-Standardized Measures of Comprehension Results.....	46
Table 4.5 WEEK EIGHT Non-Standardized Measures of Comprehension Results	48
Table 4.6 Baseline and Final MAP Reading Scores.....	49
Table 4.7 FINAL WEEK Non-Standardized Measures of Comprehension Results.....	51
Table 4.8 Reading Levels and CWPM Rates.....	53
Table 4.9 Growth Totals.....	54

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Few would argue the fact that education is among the professional fields most susceptible to trends, and within the realm of education, reading or literacy instruction seems to be more prone to change than almost any other discipline. This could be because learning to read is such an internal and individualized process. It could be due to the ever-increasing demand for literacy in the professional world. But most likely it is because literacy is the single attribute that is absolutely essential to being able to make one's way toward success in the world today.

Throughout the 20th and into the 21st Century, education and society have worked together to make significant and frequent changes in the what, why, and how of literacy instruction in classrooms across the United States, and to an increasing degree, even around the world (Woodbury & O' Donnell, 1992). This constant change can result in dramatic shifts, and even more often, results in a return to any number of practices that were once deemed ineffective or archaic. In my opinion, the real crux of the issues surrounding literacy instruction is not the materials or techniques we use, but rather, how students, and in particular, skilled readers, apply those materials and techniques in their own reading. In other words, what characteristics make an effective reader effective, and

what can teachers do to help students who are lacking acquire these strategies and apply them independently and effectively in their own reading?

As a teacher of non-native speakers of English, this question must be further narrowed. I am more specifically concerned with what characteristics make an English language learner (ELL) a successful reader, and even more importantly, what can *I* as an educator offer this special population of students to help them develop those skills?

With these questions in mind, one should first look briefly at what are among the most current responses to the first question regarding *mainstream* reading pedagogy. There is a general acceptance of the fact that a skilled reader, among other things, is an adept decoder, has strong metacognitive skills, and has adequate schema on which to draw while reading whether it be a fiction or non-fiction text (Bensoussan, 1998). In the case of fiction texts, a skilled reader has a general schema of the basic elements that make up a fiction story. This schema is sometimes called universal story grammar. According to universal story grammar, all narratives follow the same general plot pattern of beginning, problem, solution, and ending. All narratives deal with a limited number of conflict types, and all narratives relate to a similarly small set of universal themes (Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Rumelhart, 1975). A skilled reader has this complex narrative schema available throughout the fiction reading experience and uses it to understand whatever is being read. In the case of non-fiction literature, universal story grammar is not as helpful. Instead, the skilled reader uses schematic knowledge of non-fiction text structure and organizational patterns (i.e. cause and effect, point/counter-point, chronological order, etc.). The reader is able to use the organization and format of

the text to facilitate overall comprehension (Dymock, 2005). Whether reading fiction or non-fiction, these skills and schema all work together to allow the skilled reader to comprehend almost any text encountered (Bensoussan, 1998).

More recently, however, practitioners and researchers have proposed that these skills and schema are not enough. The most recent findings suggest that skilled readers are also fluent readers (Woodbury & O'Donnell, 1992). In other words, there is a direct connection, probably more accurately described as interdependence between fluency and comprehension. Some experts have even gone so far as to suggest that fluent word recognition may be *the* key to improved comprehension. They propose that increased fluency makes it possible for the reader to devote more attention to the more crucial metacognitive processes that help to directly support comprehension (Gunn, et. al. 2005). With these thoughts in mind, it should come as no surprise that many educators are now emphasizing the importance of structured reading fluency practice as a deliberately included part of daily reading instruction, especially in the case of the struggling reader.

As an English as a second language (ESL) teacher, a majority of my students are commonly classified as struggling readers, and they are certainly readers with a great deal to think about in addition to simply decoding while reading. The metacognitive energy required for an English language learner to comprehend written text is enormous. A number of the strugglers on my caseload, however, represent an even more unique and ever-increasing segment of the at-risk population in United States schools. Obviously, I work with students who speak English as a second or additional language. English, the language of instruction, is not the family's first language. Even if it is now spoken at

home, it was not the first language learned by the student. More specifically, I work with a population of students which includes a number of second and third generation immigrants. Many of my students are the children or even grandchildren of immigrants but were, themselves, born in the United States. They are conversationally quite proficient in English. These students have language skills, at least socially, that make them sound very much like native speaker students. As a result, many mainstream educators are under the illusion that what is good for the native speaker is good for all students regardless of home language.

Lenters (2004), however, emphasizes the importance of age and literacy background in determining literacy needs and programming for young second language learners. She proposes that what is best for the native speaker in the way of literacy instruction and what is best for the non-native speaker (be it first, second, or third generation immigrant) may be two very different entities regardless of conversational proficiency. In fact, learning to read in a first language and learning to read in a second language are, in some ways, two very unique processes. The connection between fluency and decoding becomes increasingly more complex as ELLs work to juggle innumerable metacognitive tasks while they read. They must be able to draw on past experiences, first language (L1) content knowledge, and background experience, vocabulary, and syntax all simultaneously while reading in the second language (L2). In addition, ELLs often have limited knowledge of U.S. mainstream culture, fewer life experiences in the popular culture, and may have difficulties understanding new text structures. They struggle to cope with the challenges presented by L2 vocabulary and differences between first and

second language phonology. All of this can make the process of reading in a second language very different from and potentially much more challenging than the same processes in a first language (Lenters, 2004).

Given these challenges, the best possible conditions for second language reading instruction would require that the learner have a firm base of first language literacy skills to use as background and reference when developing the new second language reading skills (Lenters, 2004). Unfortunately, many educators do not realize that more often than not, in spite of strong and very rich cultural, oral, and ceremonial traditions, many orally proficient students have poorly developed L1 *and* L2 literacy skills. In fact, many ELLs, and especially the second and third generation immigrant students, come from native language environments that are steeped in rich and complex oral traditions but which are written literacy-poor, or even written literacy-void. In other words, instead of having the strong L1 literacy foundation we know to be so beneficial, a majority of my clientele come to school with little to no first language written literacy background at all. This makes second language literacy an infinitely more complex issue, not only at the beginning elementary level, but especially as literacy tasks become more complex and students and educators look ahead to the literary demands of secondary and post secondary education.

The implications of these observations reach well beyond myself and my own practice. This issue of dealing with ELLs who have moved beyond basic literacy and decoding but have stalled out in comprehension is one that is becoming increasingly relevant to the ESL community as a whole. More than ample amounts of time and

immeasurable effort have been put into researching best practices for developing very basic literacy skills in the newcomer student. The more proficient speaker, along with the second/third generation immigrant student, however, is a newer phenomenon. These students and families come into our schools looking for opportunities to create lives better than those their immigrant parents were able to create. They need the training that will allow them to be a part of the skilled labor force. They must be able to read and write with the proficiency of native speakers. After all, they can speak as well as anyone else. Why should they not have the same academic expectations and level of performance?

The reality, however, is that among my students, and I am assuming they are not unique in this respect, one of my greatest concerns has to do with those students who move easily from the lowest literal and basic levels of proficiency to the higher more complex and analytical levels in select language domains but then seem to level out and are unable to display exit-level proficiency across all language domains, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In my experience, the lowest scores on these students' proficiency tests and in daily performance are often in reading comprehension, and more specifically, the comprehension of non-fiction texts that deal with unfamiliar subjects and require a heightened level of metacognition on the part of the reader.

It is this collection of information and the most recently mentioned observation in particular, that gives me cause to reflect on the suggestion that I consider implementing a structured reading fluency program as a part of my daily work with my students. The hope is that increased reading fluency will lead to deeper and more native-like

comprehension, that which has proven to be so difficult for them to attain. In the forefront of my mind as I consider a change in programming, however, is again the reality that there is still a lack of in-depth research in ESL literacy beyond that initial newcomer level literacy (Fitzgerald, 1995).

In other words, the controversy over what constitutes best practice in this particular aspect of the field is as diverse as are the clients we serve. As mentioned, to some educators, it seems that second language literacy should be treated exactly as first language literacy. If that were to be the case, then a great deal of current research would certainly prescribe that I take immediate action to add direct and formal instruction in reading fluency into my daily routine with the English language learner just as it prescribes exactly that for first language literacy development (Gunn, et.al, 2005; Hudson, et. al., 2005; Kiley, 2005; Pikulski & Chard, 2005). And while I pride myself on being an individual who is open to new ideas, I also pride myself on being an educator who proceeds with a reasonable amount of caution.

What makes this question/topic important to me is just that combination of caution and acceptance. I am happy to try something new with my students. I see so many who have come so far in language acquisition and then plateaued in their reading comprehension and continue to struggle infinitely to understand grade-level content-based texts. There is most definitely a need for some sort of intervention. I am not willing, however, to declare that reading fluency practice will be *the* answer for my students. It is my hope that it will, indeed, help them move further toward native-like comprehension. I also hope to find sufficient research to justify using such methods with

ELLs. That being said, some research also suggests fluency practice may not be *the* solution for the second language student.

To start with, reading fluency is highly dependent on oral fluency. Many of my students, however, do not possess a native-like level of even oral fluency in either first or second language due to a fractured version of both languages being spoken in many homes (Pikulski & Chard, 2005). As mentioned, many of these students communicate very well on a conversational level. This is to be expected since conversational proficiency develops first, taking only two to three years to develop (Cummins, 1996). Academic proficiency, however, can take up to seven or some even suggest as long as ten years and may not be entirely developed during elementary years (Thomas & Collier, 1997). Finally, a student needs to be able to connect printed word with both phonological memory for the word and syntactical and semantic aspects of the word before the word can be fluently decoded. In other words, English reading fluency is highly dependent on the reader's English vocabulary, again, an area of deficit for the ELL (Pikulski & Chard, 2005).

In the course of the chapters that follow, I have set out with the perspectives of both Fitzgerald and Lenters in mind. I feel compelled to further define the parameters and key elements of a literacy program suited to the needs of the ELL and in doing so to look in greater depth at one specific aspect of ESL reading research which has received seemingly less attention, that being one of the most-current trends in mainstream reading instruction, targeted reading fluency practice and how it affects overall reading comprehension in second language learners.

Through my research and experimentation, I will be studying the effect one specific structured reading fluency program created by Adams and Brown (2003), *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program*, has on the overall reading comprehension of higher oral proficiency second language learners. The main goal of the study will be to find out whether the implementation of the particular program will have a positive effect on overall non-fiction reading comprehension in higher oral proficiency second language learners.

What makes this important to others is exactly what makes it an important issue to me. Educators and researchers are working on a daily basis to discover how to approach non-native language acquisition as effectively and efficiently as possible. The final answer has not been established. Similarly, reading comprehension, in general, while a much older area of investigation, seems to override nearly all discussions in education.

The education community as a whole continues to move toward selecting and defining best-practices for all students, of which fluency practice, in particular, is quickly becoming one. Distinguishing those general best-practices from the best-practices for select and unique groups of students such as English language learners is our professional responsibility. We need to look critically at all tools available and make informed decisions about whether or not they truly are effective practices for all students or whether our time would be better spent on other methods and implementing other strategies that meet the unique needs of specific subgroups, in my case, English language learners.

In the chapter that follows, I will define fluency as a unique literacy skill. I will also bring forth research that speaks to the relationship between fluency and comprehension. Finally, I will share research findings that speak to the role and importance of fluency practice in ELL literacy instruction. Subsequent chapters will describe the study in detail, share results, and finally provide detailed analysis of the results relative to the initial question and its broader implications for the whole of L2 education.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The discussion that follows is a review and synthesis of recent academic research and literature relating to the following research question: Will the implementation of *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program* have a positive effect on overall non-fiction reading comprehension in higher oral proficiency second language learners? In order to fully address this question, a number of sub-topics must also be considered. In the discussion that follows, I will explore a variety of areas of research related to this main question. I will define reading fluency and talk about how it is related to comprehension. I will describe several tools that can be used to measure reading comprehension. I will also examine the role reading fluency plays in ELL literacy and share research that supports including fluency practice in the ELL classroom.

Defining Reading Fluency

One can find any number of definitions for the term fluency. Some scholars define it as little more than an ability to read a text accurately and quickly (Linan-Thompson, et. al., 2003). Others offer a much more specific definition of the term. Among those definitions is a general belief that reading fluency is characterized by a set of three traits, those being accuracy, rate, and prosody (Kiley, 2005). In other words, a reader could be described as reading fluently when he/she reads text in a manner in which the words are accurately decoded and pronounced, the rate is similar to that of normal

speech or conversation, and the text is read with correct expression and intonation or prosody. For the purposes of this paper, however, I have chosen to focus on a deeper definition of fluency proposed by Pikulski and Chard (2005), that being, “Reading fluency refers to efficient, effective word-recognition skills that permit a reader to construct the meaning of text. Fluency is manifested in accurate, rapid, expressive oral reading and is applied during, and makes possible, silent reading comprehension” (p. 510).

Whatever the definition, reading fluency, in one form or another, is a topic of recent interest and discussion in almost every classroom and school in the nation. Researchers acknowledge that there are many components that must be present for a reader to be able to gain full access to a text including, but not limited to, vocabulary knowledge, background and experiential knowledge, understanding of syntax, even a certain level of oral proficiency (Calderon, 2008). Fluency is certainly among those most critical elements, and a lack of fluency has the potential to contribute greatly to overall reading difficulty. Likewise, it stands to reason that increasing fluency can be the impetus for great improvement when it is given adequate attention as a distinct skill.

The Connection Between Reading Fluency and Reading Comprehension

As pointed out earlier, not all scholars accept the concept of fluency as merely a three-pronged skill (accuracy, rate, and prosody). In her summary of research in reading in the Illinois Reading Council Journal, Kiley (2005) informs the reader that, similar to Pikulski and Chard, an increasing number of researchers suggest there is a fourth component to reading fluency, that being comprehension. Such researchers propose that

fluency only exists when the reader is able to decode accurately, quickly, expressively, *and* with comprehension.

Whether viewed as an actual aspect of fluency or a skill all its own, comprehension and fluency are clearly related. Without fluency, the best decoder in the world can only trudge from word to word, and in isolation those individual words carry very little meaning (Hudson, et. al., 2005). One theory proposes that part of this connection between fluency and comprehension stems from the brain's natural limitations. Hudson, et. al. (2005) suggest that the brain is only able to focus on a single task at a time. If all its energy is put into simply decoding the individual words, there is no power left to take care of creating meaning or constructing a message from those words. At very best, a disfluent reader is able to create minimal meaning by shifting attention rapidly back and forth from decoding to comprehension. Not surprisingly, this shift can lead to a great deal of misconception.

The benefits of fluency clearly extend beyond the advantages afforded by an ability to automatically decode. In addition to allowing for time and energy to focus on decoding, fluent readers read with conversational pace, accuracy, phrasing, and expression that makes comprehension far more likely. From this standpoint, reading fluency and comprehension seem to be more reciprocal in nature rather than one leading in only one direction toward the other. In order to apply appropriate expression, rate, and accuracy, one must comprehend what is being read, but in order to comprehend, one must use appropriate expression, rate, and accuracy (Kiley, 2005).

Measuring Comprehension

The interdependence of fluency and comprehension has misled many educators and parents to believe that fluency alone indicates comprehension. But almost every educator can point to any number of examples of students who read beautifully but comprehend next to nothing in any given text. ELLs of high oral proficiency are particularly susceptible to this dangerous illusion. Students who have achieved native-like speaking proficiency are often able to read with almost perfect accuracy, rate, and expression, but limitations in background knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, and syntactical knowledge make comprehension very difficult.

Further complicating the issue is measurability. Fluency as a sole entity is relatively easy to quantify. A listener can easily track a reader's words per minute, evaluate expression, and even score the prosody of the reading. Comprehension, on the other hand, is an invisible metacognitive process that happens entirely inside the mind of the reader. All other indicators of fluency can be easily measured and tracked to ensure the student's fluency is improving, but comprehension must be carefully and deliberately observed and measured as well. After all, there is little value in reading fluently if one gleans no meaningful information from what is read.

One of the most common methods used to measure reading comprehension is basic text-based comprehension questions. In this traditional format, comprehension is measured according to how well children remember the details of what they have read (Allington, 2001). Many educators and researchers, however, propose that new and additional assessment tools and strategies beyond traditional tests of information recall be

used to assess the critical and internal process of reading comprehension (Allington, 2001; DuBravac & Dalle, 2002; Lipson & Wixson, 1997; Stoicovy, 2004). Question generation, oral retelling, and cloze completion are three of the many traditional assessment tools/options. All three are described in the sections that follow.

Question Generation

In an effort to gain a truer picture of student reading comprehension, DuBravac and Dalle (2002) asked students to generate questions about the text as they read. The complexity of the questions they created indicated the degree to which they comprehended the text. According to their research, readers ask one of five types of questions.

A reader may ask a question that clearly indicates miscomprehension. Such questions make it clear that the reader did not understand the meaning of the text. They may indicate confusion about syntax, thinking a noun is a verb or a place is a person, or they may expose confusion surrounding an idiomatic expression. These types of errors clearly show the student did not understand the text.

A reader may ask a linguistic question pertaining to the syntax or semantic traits of the text. Such questions include requests for definitions or clarification of meaning. These questions show slightly more comprehension than miscomprehension questions in that the reader is aware of a misunderstanding but is not able to get to the actual message of the text.

The third type of question would be commonly known as a textually explicit question. The answer to the question that the reader asks can be found word for word in

the text the reader just read. These questions demand and demonstrate little background knowledge and no information or comprehension beyond what the reader can find in the passage.

One step above the textually explicit question is the textually implicit question. In this type of question, a reader demonstrates an ability to use some background information while reading. The reader might connect two ideas in a story to ask a question about cause and effect. This requires more complex thought because the cause and effect relationship would not be directly stated in the passage, but the reader would have to draw on life experience to see that the two events are related and then form a question that asks about that relationship.

Finally, the most complex type of question a reader will form is a scripturally implicit question. These questions require an answer that is not in the text. A response to this type of question requires the respondent to draw on personal life experiences, those completely outside the text, to infer an answer. This type of question demonstrates the highest level of comprehension.

DuBravac and Dalle (2002) used this information about the five types of questions to measure student levels of reading comprehension. Students asked questions as they read a given passage, and those questions were scored according to the question type with the scripturally implicit question being worth the most and the miscomprehension question worth the least. In this way, comprehension was measured throughout the passage and researchers were allowed to see what was happening in terms of metacognition not only after reading but also during reading.

Oral Retellings

In addition to question formation during reading, oral retelling can be a very effective means of assessing comprehension, especially for students who are more proficient in speaking than they are in writing or reading. Such students can use their strongest language skills to share what they have learned from a reading passage. Oral retelling provides evidence of comprehension independent of a student's reading or writing ability. It also gives the student an opportunity to demonstrate speaking proficiency or ability to *tell* about what he/she understands. Retelling confirms the student's reading of a text and reveals the extent of comprehension. It allows the assessor to see what a reader views as important and how the reader organized the information read.

An additional benefit of retelling as a measure of comprehension is that it is natural for children and does not necessarily force them to process text in a specific or prescribed manner as is often the case with traditional post-reading comprehension questions (Lipson & Wixson, 1997; Stoicovy, 2004).

Cloze Completion

Not all measures of comprehension must be entirely open-ended. In fact, entirely open-ended responses can challenge a non-native speaker to have to construct sentences and thoughts in a language he/she has not yet mastered. Completely open-ended measures of comprehension are also, by nature, somewhat subjective.

Cloze activities, in which select words from a passage are deleted and a reader is asked to fill in the blanks, have been used for a number of years to measure reading

comprehension. In the early 1970's, educators began to use cloze completion activities to assess L2 reading comprehension. Cloze activities are different from isolated 'fill in the blank' statements because the cloze blanks occur throughout a longer passage and are completely contextualized (Keshavarz & Salimi, 2007).

Such activities have been proven useful tools in assessing reading comprehension in that they can be objectively scored, either the student inserted the correct term or he/she did not (Baker, 1989). Cloze activities also demonstrate a student's syntactical and semantic comprehension of the passage. Cloze activities not only demonstrate comprehension, they can be used to show the development of comprehension skills. A student's ability to complete a cloze passage demonstrates that the individual is thinking about the sentence and words as part of the entire passage and has grasped the main idea well enough to predict the words that belong in the empty spaces (Keshavarz & Salimi, 2007).

Role of Reading Fluency in Second Language Literacy

Whether one views fluency and comprehension as interdependent, sequential, or subordinate skills, is not necessarily a critical distinction. That there is a relationship at all seems to make clear that fluency has definite value in the literacy classroom. Any number of studies have investigated the benefits of supplemental fluency instruction for at risk readers, and all seem to find some benefit (Kiley, 2005; Hudson, et. al, 2005; Alder, et. al. 2007; Coyne, et. al. 2008). Unfortunately, far fewer studies have been conducted with the intent of investigating the benefits of such programs for the second language learners specifically (Gunn, et.al, 2005). And even less is known about which

components are most critical to the development of second language literacy skills (Linan-Thompson, et. al., 2003).

Many variables come into the discussion when one attempts to decipher the keys to second language literacy. The potential lack of fluency is far from being the only, or even the primary, barrier a non-native speaker potentially faces when trying to comprehend texts in a second language. Several studies examine these factors.

A lack of phonological awareness can make accurate decoding in a second language very challenging. In a 2003 study, Linan-Thompson, et. al. offered a reading intervention to a group of 2nd grade ELLs at risk in the area of reading. Their intervention provided the students with thirty minutes of instruction five times per week for over 13 weeks. Students were put in small groups and given lessons that included fluency instruction, phonological awareness training, instructional-level reading, word/vocabulary study, and writing. At the end of the treatment, progress was measured in all five areas. Students showed improvement in all areas throughout the treatment and even into follow-up trials four weeks after the intervention, but phoneme segmentation fell sharply four months after the intervention. This key early-literacy skill was proven to be difficult to obtain and extremely difficult to retain for the language learners in the study. These results speak strongly to the magnitude of this obstacle to comprehension faced by the ELL.

Additionally, decoding requires that a student is able to connect a printed word with a phonological memory for the word as well as an understanding of the meaning of the word. If a reader is unable to recognize and attach meaning to a word, the process of

decoding can become pointless and painful (Pikulski & Chard, 2005). In fact, Verhoeven (2000) conducted a study comparing the reading and spelling skills of native and non-native Dutch speaking students through grade two. All students were given the same curriculum and strategies for the duration of the treatment. At the end of the treatment, students' development and achievement in the areas of vocabulary knowledge, word decoding, word spelling, and reading comprehension were measured. The results of the study showed the non-native speakers to be less-efficient in the areas of spelling and comprehension. This inefficiency was shown to be directly related to a lack of vocabulary knowledge. Further analysis led Verhoeven to conclude that second language reading comprehension relies on vocabulary and lexical knowledge to an even greater extent than does first language reading comprehension.

In addition to the limitations of an under-developed vocabulary, many second language students come to the classroom with limited background knowledge about the topics addressed in texts. In fact, these two gaps may have a reciprocal relationship. Without adequate vocabulary knowledge, learners need to rely heavily on their own background experiences and schema. Unfortunately, those schema, being based on the students' native cultures, traditions, and often limited life experiences can lead to inaccurate inferences about unknown vocabulary and the meaning of the text as a whole.

In a 1998 study, Bensoussan sought to measure the effects of schema on second language literacy and comprehension. Her study of 125 university students revealed that a significant portion of miscomprehension resulted from students activating inaccurate schemata.

Furthermore, while we know that first language literacy can provide a strong basis for the development of second language literacy skills, we also know that the ELL often comes to reading in the L2 with little or no background in general literacy in any language, an unfortunate symptom of refugee life and/or low socioeconomic status. In fact, one of the greatest barriers to comprehension and specifically second language reading comprehension has apparently little to do with language proficiency and a great deal to do with inexperience with written literature in any language.

Second language students have a unique challenge in trying to decipher text structure, particularly with respect to non-fiction or expository texts. The academic and literacy backgrounds of the more typical language learner can be something of an obstacle to understanding narrative text structure simply because the ELL's life experiences may not be as similar to typical narrative text structures as those of the native-speaker. These same students may be able to draw on strong oral literary traditions to make connections to narrative texts. Oral traditions can be very helpful in reading and understanding the bulk of fiction writing (Lenters, 2004). Understanding expository text structure, however, truly requires a level of academic practice and training, an opportunity not often available to the second language student (Dymock, 2005).

Beyond the structure of the text is the actual content. Again, when compared to narrative text, the content is far less accessible. Expository text is more often about sharing new information that may connect tenuously, at best, to background knowledge rather than relating directly to personal experience as is the case with most fiction texts.

The second language student must attempt to decipher new vocabulary and ideas and connect them to an entirely different set of experiences he or she may or may not have had in an entirely different language (DuBruvac & Dalle, 2002).

Finally, other researchers have suggested that second language readers may struggle partly as a result of interference from their first language (Picard, 2002; Wang, et. al., 2003). It is important, however, to note that further studies have since revealed that this is very rarely the case. More often first language skills, especially when applied in conjunction with priceless knowledge about native cultural and oral traditions, play an irreplaceable role in supporting the development of second language skills.

Unfortunately, for so many students, however, while the cultural and oral traditions are strong, irreplaceable L1 reading and written comprehension skills are severely underdeveloped (Verhoeven, 2000).

Reading Fluency Practice in the ELL Classroom

So many factors stand in the way as the second language learner pursues L2 literacy and comprehension that one would be challenged to argue that any supplemental reading skill instruction, would be anything but beneficial. It is widely known that time and budget constraints make it nearly impossible to provide the at-risk reader all that is needed to close the gap within the structure of the regular classroom. Furthermore, one cannot possibly attempt to address all skills at once. Instead, educators must focus their attention on a narrower and more easily manipulated topic and a topic that has strong potential for impacting student achievement.

In the case of this study, that narrowed and selected objective is to increase reading fluency with the hope of improving reading comprehension of expository texts. While it is clear that improving reading fluency only addresses one of the many factors that can hinder native-like comprehension, there are enough potential benefits to employing fluency practice in the second language classroom to make it a worthwhile focus.

First among those potential benefits is a struggle that is unique to second language learners. It has long been held that oral fluency leads naturally to reading fluency. Calderon (2007) proposes that the relationship between oral and reading fluency is not as sequential as once believed. Both skills, however, are critical, and academic oral fluency can take seven and sometimes as long as ten years to develop naturally (Thomas & Collier, 1997). It becomes important then to deliberately include oral fluency practice. Repeated oral reading required for structured reading fluency practice has the potential to help to develop academic oral and reading fluency more quickly. By practicing reading expository texts out loud, a student is able to practice speaking academically with the scaffold of a written script as opposed to having to generate ideas and language structures independently (Verhoeven, 2000).

Furthermore, given all possible options for reading interventions and/or supplemental reading instruction, structured reading fluency practice, especially as specifically outlined in *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program* by nature of its design, seems well suited to the unique needs of the second language literacy student. The continual re-reading and progress charting along with partner-based design

meet six of eight specific characteristics identified by Gersten and Jimenez (1994) in their article, “Constructs for Effective Instruction for Language Minority Students.” These characteristics are outlined below.

Gersten and Jimenez (1994) state that effective instruction for ELLs should provide students with individualized challenges and measurable goals suited to the student’s current level. Fluency, in terms of words per minute, is easily measured and monitored so as to provide students with the desired challenge called for in the article.

Instruction for ELLs needs to involve the learner as much as possible. Fluency practice is a student-monitored and student-directed activity. It requires that the student take full ownership in his/her practice and progress and be engaged and alert throughout the practice session.

ELLs also benefit greatly from highly collaborative learning environments. They rely on interactions with peers to make learning relevant. Collaboration also leads naturally to modification and adaptation of instructional pace and conversation tailored perfectly to the individual student. Reading fluency practice is highly collaborative. It is set up in a modified running record model in which one student listens, reads along, and tracks errors while the other reads out loud (described in more detail in Chapter 3 Methods). The student and partner are required to collaborate throughout the process and further develop language skills by listening to and providing one another with constructive feedback.

A natural bi-product of this collaborative setting satisfies another need especially critical to the ELL. ELLs require immediate and concrete feedback whenever possible.

Brief reading fluency practice provides feedback regarding errors and measurable growth within minutes. In addition to daily records, students track their progress over time which offers additional long-term feedback.

Finally, reading fluency practice is easily scaffolded which leads to guaranteed success for every individual. Many ELLs find very little success in school. They are constantly struggling to keep pace as they juggle the demands associated with acquiring language and the required grade-level content at the same time. The difficulty levels of student practice passages can be easily adjusted to suit the instructional level of each individual. This scaffolding all but guarantees success and maintains dignity.

Conclusion

Clearly the research illustrates the importance and value of fluency as a component of mainstream reading instruction as a whole. It also seems clear that fluency is closely related, in one fashion or another, to the over-arching umbrella of reading comprehension. The most current research even suggests that fluency is one of the most critical components of literacy instruction and that it is often missing in the form of formal and structured practice in the classroom.

Very little, if any, attention has been focused on determining whether reading fluency plays as critical a role in non-native speaker reading comprehension specifically. Studies have shown that fluency practice can be effective in increasing prosody, accuracy, and reading rates in ELLs (Adams & Brown, 2003). There is not, however, research regarding the effects of such practice specifically on ELL comprehension.

In light of a lack of research, it seems reasonable that some form of intervention or supplemental instruction is more than acceptable and could hardly be harmful. Fluency practice seems to be very well-suited to the ELL classroom, and it takes very little time away from the regular curriculum.

In an attempt to uncover the role that fluency actually does play in second language comprehension, it seems an effort to implement structured reading fluency practice in the ELL classroom would be a good step toward beginning to determine at least one element of reading skill that should or should not be included in the list of necessary components of a second language acquisition program.

The chapter that follows will outline the materials, methods, and participants involved in a study that seeks to determine whether or not one specific structured reading fluency practice program, *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program*, has a positive effect on the overall reading comprehension of the higher oral proficiency second language learner.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

In order to determine whether the implementation of *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program* could have a positive effect on overall non-fiction reading comprehension in higher oral proficiency second language learners, I combined a number of my own concerns and ideas with those brought to light in the contents of the preceding chapter, the review of research, in order to create a specific study with the following characteristics. In this chapter I will provide detailed descriptions of my research paradigms, the students who participated in the study, the data collected throughout, and the treatment used in the study.

Research Paradigms

The study falls within the parameters of three research paradigms, all defined and described by Mackey and Grass (2005) in *Second Language Research: Methodology and Design*. Because the question at hand examines the relationship between fluency practice and reading comprehension, it is classified as a quantitative study. Even more specifically, it is an quasi-experimental quantitative study in which a treatment, *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program*, is used with a non-randomly assigned group of English language learners and pretreatment and post-treatment performance is compared.

The study is also qualitative due to the fact that all data is analyzed for general trends over the course of the study. There are also only six participants in the study, a small sample that would make statistical analysis inappropriate. Additionally, I set out with only the question of whether or not comprehension would be affected by the treatment and had no formal hypothesis about the results.

Finally, the study is classroom-based. The study was performed entirely within the parameters of the regular ELL classroom setting. Participants in the study were already members of the classroom in question and there was no control over outside influences or variables.

Participants

Selection Process/Criteria

The participants in my study were identified as being eligible to participate in the study through the use of a combination of several screening criteria. In order to receive the intervention, students needed to qualify for ESL (English as a Second Language) services, which means they learned a language other than English before learning English and have not reached full proficiency in English in at least one of the four language domains; speaking, listening, reading or writing. Participants displayed high or native-like proficiency in speaking but had deficits in the area of reading, and specifically in reading comprehension as indicated on the ACCESS for ELLs (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to State for English Language Learners), and/or displayed significant deficits in literacy and/or comprehension as

measured by the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) assessment. The final criteria for eligibility required parental permission to participate in the study.

Significant deficits in literacy and comprehension, in this case, meant that the student's MAP RIT (Rasch Unit) score was one or more years below grade level as defined by the MAP guidelines. The MAP assessment is offered three times throughout the academic year to all students in grade four at the school in which the study took place. At the conclusion of the Reading portion of the MAP assessment, the student is assigned a RIT score based on his/her performance on the assessment. A RIT score provides an estimate of student achievement/ability based on how the said student performs on the individual items of the assessment. If a student answers a question correctly, points are added to the student's RIT. If the question is answered incorrectly, points are subtracted. More difficult items are worth more points toward a RIT than less difficult, but more difficult items also take more points away from a RIT score if they are answered incorrectly. This score is independent of the age or grade of the student, but reflects the instructional level at which the student is currently performing. The individualized nature of the MAP test and its corresponding RIT score makes it particularly well-suited to assessing comprehension for ELLs whose reading skills may be quite different than those of same age or grade peers.

The MAP assessment tests students in three categories of reading including word analysis/vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and literary analysis. After taking the 52 question Reading MAP assessment on the computer, each student receives a total score based on his/her performance. Performance in each of the three categories is

also evaluated and reported on separately in addition to the RIT score mentioned above. Because the purpose of this study was to determine the treatment's affect on overall comprehension, particular attention was paid to that sub-score in addition to the RIT score as a whole. In addition to serving as a screening tool, these scores also provided a baseline score for the student's reading comprehension ability.

In addition to the MAP assessment results, information regarding students' English speaking proficiency and English reading proficiency was needed in order to participate. The question at hand required that participants have a deficiency in the area of English reading and comprehension. Student results from the ACCESS for ELLs assessment were used as evidence of such a deficiency.

The ACCESS for ELLs is the language proficiency assessment tool adopted by the state of Wisconsin, along with several other states in the nation, which is used to measure the yearly language proficiency progress of ELLs throughout the state. Information obtained through this assessment is required by the federal government. Included in that information is a proficiency score in the area of reading/language arts. That score is further broken down on the report to include English literacy and comprehension proficiency. Students are scored on a scale of one (Entering) to six (Reaching or Exit level status). These levels describe the spectrum of a learner's progression from knowing little to no English to acquiring the English skills necessary to be successful in an English-only mainstream classroom without extra support.

It should be noted that almost all students display relatively strong oral language before they can demonstrate that same level of proficiency skills in the other three

domains. Additionally, students often progress through the first levels of reading quite easily and efficiently and then plateau as they hit the higher levels. Given these observations and the fact that the goal of the study was to find out if reading fluency training was a part of the missing piece for these students, particular preference was given during the selection process to those students whose speaking proficiency scores were at or near exit proficiency but whose literacy and comprehension proficiency scores lagged significantly.

Demographics of Selected Group

A summary of the demographic information about the participants is included in Table 3.1

Table 3.1 Summary of Student Demographics

Student #	Gender	Classroom Assignment	Home Language	Country of Birth	Years of Education	Years of Education in English
3	F	Cluster	Hindi-Rwandi	Rwanda	5	2
7	F	Cluster	Hmong	Thailand	5	2
11	F	Cluster	Hmong	U.S.	5	5
12	F	Non-cluster	Hmong	U.S.	5	5
13	F	Non-cluster	Hmong	U.S.	5	5
14	M	Cluster	Hmong	U.S.	5	5

Based on the results of the screening process, six grade-four students were chosen to participate in the study. Five of the six students were female and one was male. Four of those selected to participate were members of an ESL cluster classroom in which there

were also 20 native speakers, and the mainstream and ESL specialist collaborate on a daily basis to provide instruction appropriate for all learners in the classroom. Two of the participants were members of a different classroom and were assigned to that class based on the fact that they were very near exit status. All six participants were members of a 30 minute ESL supplemental instruction class at the end of the day.

Five of the six students were native speakers of Hmong. Of those five, one spoke Thai before coming to the United States. That same student was the only one of the five Hmong students who was not born in the United States having come to the U.S. two years ago. Only one of the students in the study was a native speaker of Hindi-Rwandi, a Rwandan tribal language. She, along with the Thai speaker, were the only two who had received formal education in a language other than English, and both had been formally educated in their native languages from age five or six until their arrival in the U.S.

These two participants, unlike the other four participants, were first generation immigrants having come to the U.S. with their families two years earlier. Although the study is particularly concerned with the effects of reading fluency practice on the English reading comprehension of higher-proficiency ELLs, these two students were included in the study because they were already members of the supplemental instruction class and would benefit from the treatment and interaction with peers. Additionally, having already been in U.S. schools for two years, their oral language skills were strong and developing quickly.

In addition to the six ELLs, six native English speaking students participated in the treatment. These students were not a part of the study, but were included in the group

based on an identified need for reading fluency practice. These students measured and tracked their fluency growth daily, but their comprehension was not measured. They left the room after the treatment was complete each day.

Classroom Description

The treatment, *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program*, was provided as a part of the daily entering-the-room routine during the first portion (roughly the first six minutes) of the afore-mentioned 30 minute ESL supplemental instruction class at the end of the day. This class period is formally described as following a model of pre-teaching. In other words, second language students attend the class for a portion of the day each day. While they are there, English language reading and writing skills are integrated with content instruction that aligns with topics that will be covered in the near future in the mainstream classroom. The study took place over twelve weeks, from the beginning of the third quarter to the middle of the fourth quarter of the school year.

Data Collection

Baseline Data

Because the main goal of the study was to find out whether or not *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program* could help second language learners increase non-fiction reading comprehension skills, several forms of baseline data needed to be collected to provide an accurate picture of the effects of the treatment on comprehension.

The data used to measure comprehension progress included one standardized measure and one non-standardized measure which consisted of three separate components. The end score from the standardized measure was compared to the

beginning score when the study was finished. Scores for the non-standardized measure were collected at the beginning and end of the study as well as at two points, during week four and week eight, of the study so as to measure progress during the study.

ACCESS speaking proficiency and literacy and comprehension proficiency scores were used to qualify students for the study. Because the testing window fell prior to the end of the treatment, however, this data was not able to be used for to make final comparisons.

MAP reading scores provided standardized baseline reading comprehension information. This assessment and a description of the type of information it reveals is discussed thoroughly in the Selection Process/Criteria section of this chapter.

As pointed out in the discussion of comprehension assessment and measurement in Chapter Two: Review of Research, reading comprehension, is a multi-faceted construct. To limit one's evaluation of a student's comprehension ability to standardized and close-ended multiple-choice questions would be to tell only half-the story of the student's ability and progress.

It is with this in mind that the study was designed to include an open-ended, subjective, and as a result, non-standardized measure of reading comprehension skills and progress. In addition to the MAP, a non-standardized baseline assessment was given. This assessment included samples of student oral retelling similar to that described by Stoicovy (2004), a cloze passage like that used by Keshavarz and Salimi (2007) in which students are asked to demonstrate comprehension by filling in key terms missing from the passage read, and a question formation activity modeled after that of Dubravac and Dalle

(2002). All three of these are non-standardized gauges of comprehension and metacognition as recommended and described in the review of research. They were given to students following two readings of a selected non-fiction passage taken from an instructional level section of The Six Minute Solution materials. The retelling portion of the assessment was scored by an unbiased panel of three scorers who each used a retelling scoring rubric (Appendix A). Students' retellings were recorded and then transcribed verbatim so as to ensure that accent did not play a role in comprehensibility. The scores from all panel members were averaged to give each individual retelling a final percent score. The cloze activity was scored according to the number of terms accurately filled in out of the total blanks (see an example in Appendix B). Spelling approximations were accepted. Finally, the questions were rated by the same panel of three scorers using the scale (Appendix C) based on the types of questions the student was able to develop with the highest score being afforded for a scripturally implicit question and the lowest score of zero being supplied for a miscomprehension question (see Chapter Two: Review of Research for further description of measuring comprehension through the use of question formation).

Intermediate Data

Following the collection of the baseline information, and one quarter of the way through the study, during week four, a second set of non-standardized data was collected. Students were given a new passage to read through twice. This passage was again at an instructional level of difficulty for the student, meaning it may have been at an instructional reading level slightly higher than the initial sample passage. Scores for oral

retelling, cloze passage, and question formation were again collected and recorded as per the procedure described in the Baseline Data subsection.

This procedure was repeated three quarters of the way through the study, during week eight. The eventual result was a more-informed picture of how comprehension was affected not only after, but also during the course of the treatment.

Final Data

Final data for total comparison was collected at the conclusion of week twelve of the study. This data was compared to baseline and interim data, and allowed for conclusions to be drawn regarding whether the treatment had positive, negative, or insignificant effects on the students' abilities to comprehend non-fiction texts.

Final data included two of the three data pieces used in the baseline study. Those included, the MAP reading scores and final results from a final instructional-level reading passage and accompanying activities (retelling, cloze, and questioning).

Incidental Data

In addition to the data regarding reading comprehension progress, students and instructor participated in on-going data-collection and monitoring processes dictated by the use of *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program*. During the course of the treatment, students were required to keep daily fluency records and create graphs of progress which included correct words per minute (cwpm) rates and records of the instructional levels of the practice texts used.

At the end of each week of practice, student and teacher would examine the cwpm and compare that number to the grade level targets. If a student's ending cwpm was

within the range for the level piece they had read that week, the student would be assigned a piece at the same instructional level for the next week. If the student's ending cwpm was above the range for the level piece they had read that week, the student would be assigned a piece at the next highest instructional grade level.

This data was required by the program. Data collection was part of what increased student motivation and consequently fluency performance over the course of the treatment. It was assumed that students' reading rates would increase through the use of the program because it was designed to adjust to student levels so as to facilitate progress for all. Because of the assumed reliability of the treatment, the data regarding fluency improvement was less pertinent than the data regarding comprehension. In other words, the main concern was not whether the program would increase reading fluency or not, rather the main question was whether the rate increase would be a deciding factor in making non-fiction texts more comprehensible to the second language learner.

Data Analysis

All of this data was collected and carefully analyzed for trends. Student scores from each of the separate elements of the non-standardized assessments, cloze passage, retelling, and questioning scores, were totaled each week to get a raw score out of a possible 48 points. That total raw score was converted to a percentage, and the percentage was compared to the previous week's percent score. A measure of percentage point increase or decrease was divided into the prior week's percent score in order to obtain a measure of percent change.

At the end of the study, in addition to comparing the score from the eighth week to that of twelfth week, the final week's non-standardized assessment scores were compared to the baseline scores and likewise with the MAP at that time. Finally, the statistics for percent of growth from baseline to final on MAP were combined with that from the non-standardized assessments. This yielded an overall picture of the effect of the treatment. Tables were used throughout to organize the data and facilitate comparisons.

The Treatment

Program Rationale

The specific treatment was chosen based on recommendation, feasibility, and applicability. *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program* has been used with great success with several native-speaking students in mainstream and Title I classrooms in the region surrounding the school in study. Colleagues had a level of familiarity with the program which added to its credibility.

What made the specific program most appealing was the time commitment for implementation as well as the appropriateness of the materials and differentiation built into the program. First of all, the practice passages included with the program are all non-fiction expository texts of the sort that a student might find in daily content-area reading and/or research and of the sort that seem to cause a great deal of comprehension struggle for second language learners in particular.

Additionally, as described by the title and in the method prescribed by the program, this treatment requires only six minutes at the beginning of the day. In the

Introduction of this paper, the limitations of time and money with regard to second language acquisition and instruction were mentioned as motivation for making programming changes based only on well-researched and proven methods. In accordance with good educational practice, *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program* was field-tested prior to mass-publication. Those tests demonstrated the ability of the program to increase oral reading fluency in mainstream *and* L2 learners. The only field test that spoke to comprehension supplemented the basic program with an additional fifty minutes of direct comprehension instruction (Adams & Brown, 2003). The existing research, then, leaves one to ask what effect the program, in its purest six-minute form, strictly used to practice and improve fluency rates, will have on overall comprehension specifically for English language learners. In this way, the program is well-suited for experimentation in that it requires very minimal time commitment, six minutes, on the part of the student and/or instructor and interferes minimally with regular day-to-day curriculum and expectations.

Finally, the particular program met many of the criteria proposed by Gersten and Jimenez (1994) in their article, “Constructs for Effective Instruction for Language Minority Students” and expounded upon in the Review of Research as being essential characteristics in a successful L2 reading intervention or supplemental reading program. *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program* is a student-directed learning program. It involves collaboration on the part of students. It is individualized and can be adapted to benefit students at a variety of ability levels. It incorporates student record-keeping and visible measures of daily progress, and it focuses strictly on reading fluency,

specifically reading rate (correct words read per minute) so as to limit the number of instructional variables in the treatment.

Program Description

The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program is designed for students to work in like-leveled pairs. The instructor begins by assessing each student individually to determine the instructional level for that particular student. Students are paired based on those levels. It then becomes the responsibility of the partner pairs to record daily statistics and track progress. The instructor monitors progress throughout the week, and adjusts the difficulty of the practice passages at the end of the week according to the needs of the students.

During each six minute session, Partner One begins by whisper reading an instructional level practice passage while Partner Two follows along circling errors and marking the one minute stopping point. At the end of Partner One's practice reading, Partner Two counts the number of correct words and shares that cwpm (correct words per minute) information along with any incorrect words from the passage. Partner One then takes a minute to record his/her data on his/her own fluency record (Appendix D). After Partner One has finished, Partner Two reads while Partner One observes and records errors in addition to marking the last word in the one minute timing. Partner One then totals Partner Two's information, shares that, using the error correction script offered by the program, and Partner Two records his/her data on his/her own fluency record. Those four steps along with "one minute" for beginning preparation and "one minute" for clean-up complete the six minute daily procedure. The instructor circulates throughout the

course of the treatment each day. Students graph the information from their reading fluency records at the end of each week and the instructor adjusts the difficulty of each student's practice passage for the next week based on the previous week's performance. Depending on the results, partnerships may also need to be changed to ensure that students are matched with partners who read at similar levels.

Conclusion

The participants of this study, the chosen setting, the data collection techniques and information, and the specific treatment were all carefully chosen. Those elements of the study were chosen with the goal of determining whether or not *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program* would have a positive effect on ELLs' non-fiction reading comprehension.

In the following chapter, Chapter Four: Results and Discussion, the reader will find the results of the described treatment along with an in-depth analysis of those results.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Throughout the study, data was collected to determine the degree, if any, to which overall reading comprehension was affected by the specific treatment, *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program*, described in the preceding chapter. In this chapter the reader will find a summation of that data as it was collected in each phase of the study along with critical analysis of the results.

Collected Data and Analysis

Screening and Baseline Data

The goal of the study was to determine the effects *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program* had on overall reading comprehension. To accomplish this goal, baseline comprehension scores were collected prior to the start of the intervention. This data served a dual purpose in the study. Student ACCESS scores were used to identify students for the study. MAP scores were used as qualifying data as well as baseline data that could be compared and examined for evidence of effectiveness of the treatment.

The MAP reading score is a standardized measure of comprehension. The test is described in detail in Chapter Three of this study. MAP results have a margin of error of

± 3 points with the study participants scoring as follows on the 2007 Winter MAP reading test (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Winter MAP Reading Scores

Student Number	Actual 2007 Winter MAP RIT Score	2007 MAP RIT Range (accounting for margin of error)
3	185	182-188
7	197	194-200
11	187	184-190
12	214	211-217
13	177	174-180
14	187	184-190

According to the MAP RIT scale norms (2005 norms) used in the School District of Holmen, any score at or below a RIT of 194 puts a student in the category of “potentially at risk.” Accounting for margin of error, however, any score at or below 197 would put the student in that same category. One can see, then, that of the six students participating in the study, five were potentially at risk according to baseline data which automatically qualified them for the intervention and indicated clearly that they had room for significant growth in the area of reading comprehension. Student #12, however, scored slightly above the mastery benchmark for grade four on the winter assessment. Her inclusion in the study was based on her 2007 ACCESS Literacy and Comprehension scores, shown in Table 4.2 on page 44.

Table 4.2 ACCESS Test Scores

Student Number	2007 ACCESS Speaking Score	2007 Literacy Score	2007 Comprehension Score
3	5.3	3.6	3.9
7	5.7	4.3	4.8
11	5.7	3.7	4.6
12	6.0	4.3	5.0
13	5.6	3.7	3.7
14	6.0	3.7	4.8

In addition to the two standardized baseline measures, a three-part non-standardized comprehension battery was used to gather baseline data regarding pre-treatment comprehension ability. The battery is described thoroughly in the previous chapter. Each student was given an instructional-level non-fiction reading selection and then asked to provide a retelling of the passage, formulate questions about the selection, and complete a cloze exercise with the passage. Each student's responses were scored by three separate and unbiased judges. The different judges' scores were averaged together to get a single score for each aspect of the battery. The raw totals from the three sections of the battery were added and compared to a total possible 48 points to get a baseline percentage. Those results are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 WEEK ONE Non-Standardized Measures of Comprehension Results

Student #	Retelling	Cloze	Questioning	Overall raw score (out of 48 possible)	%
3	7	8	2.25	17.25	36
7	12	10	7	29	60
11	7	8	6.25	21.25	44
12	7	9	6.25	22.25	46
13	4	4	4.5	12.5	26
14	7	9	7.5	23.5	49

Not surprisingly, all participants in the study were significantly challenged by the tasks. It is important to note that judges were specifically directed to score student responses based on content and to ignore any errors in grammar or syntax characteristic of non-native speaker speech. With this in mind, it is clear that while all three aspects were difficult, question formation was the most difficult, although it is widely regarded as one of the greatest indicators of higher level, deeper, comprehension (Dubravac & Dalle, 2002). Retelling and cloze also left a great deal of room for improvement throughout the course of the study.

Intermediate Data

As per the methods prescribed for the study, the same non-standardized measures were collected at the end of weeks four and eight of the study. Baseline information is included in gray in each of the proceeding tables in order to facilitate comparison. The percent column shows the students' scores out of 100%. Since each section of the non-

standardized battery was worth a potential 48 points, the total overall raw score divided by 48 was used to yield a percent score for the battery as a whole. The column to the right of the percent column indicates the number of percentage point increase or decrease between the fourth week percent and the baseline percent. The final column indicates that percent increase. For example, for student #3, his/her score increased from a 36% on the baseline assessment to a 37% on the same assessment in week four. His/her score increased by one percentage point. One percentage point is three percent of the baseline 36%. The other students' scores were similarly compared.

Table 4.4 WEEK FOUR Non-Standardized Measures of Comprehension Results

Student #	Retelling		Cloze		Questioning		Overall raw score (out of 48)		%		Score Increase	% Growth
	Week 1	Week 4	Week 1	Week 4	Week 1	Week 4	Week 1	Week 4	Week 1	Week 4		
14	7	9	9	6	7.5	6	23.5	21	49	44	-5	-10%
13	4	7	4	4	4.5	5.75	12.5	16.75	26	35	+9	+35%
12	7	9	9	12	6.25	8	22.25	29	46	60	+14	+30%
11	7	8	8	13	6.25	10.5	21.25	31.5	44	66	+22	+50%
7	12	6	10	14	7	7	29	27	60	56	-4	-7%
3	7	5	8	6	2.25	6.75	17.25	17.75	36	37	+1	+3%

Four weeks into the treatment, the majority of students had made marked progress in comprehension according to the results of the battery. Four of the six participants showed growth. Students #11, #12, and #13 made substantial gains with Student #11 being the most notable. The two students who did not show growth fell just slightly from their baseline scores. With eight weeks remaining in the study, it appeared that the treatment was effective in increasing the majority of the students' comprehension.

When the battery was offered again at the end of week eight of the treatment, the results fluctuated a great deal from week four. Only a few trends were visible in the data. Student #3 showed a very large increase in comprehension from the previous scores and continued a trend of progress. Student #7's scores continued to drop. Students #11 and #12 decreased nearly to baseline levels. Only Student #13 showed significant growth at both testing intervals. Student #14 showed a great deal of growth after falling in the first four weeks of the treatment. This analysis is illustrated in Table 4.5. The previous weeks' scores are again shown in gray and the final column indicating the percent growth or loss in each student's score compared to the prior assessment's score.

Table 4.5 WEEK EIGHT Non-Standardized Measures of Comprehension Results

Student #	Retelling			Cloze			Questioning			Overall raw score			Score in %			Score gain/loss from week 4 to 8	% Growth from week 4 to 8
	Week 1	Week 4	Week 8	Week 1	Week 4	Week 8	Week 1	Week 4	Week 8	Week 1	Week 4	Week 8	Week 1	Week 4	Week 8		
3	7	5	9	8	6	14	2.25	6.75	7.75	17.25	17.75	30.75	36	37	64	+27	+73%
7	12	6	5	10	14	14	7	7	7.25	29	27	26.25	60	56	55	-1	-2%
11	7	8	4	8	13	8	6.25	10.5	8.25	21.25	31.5	20.25	44	66	42	-24	-36%
12	7	9	5	9	12	13	6.25	8	6	22.25	29	24	46	60	50	-10	-17%
13	4	7	8	4	4	10	4.5	5.75	6.25	12.5	16.75	24.25	26	35	51	+16	+46%
14	7	9	10	9	6	9	7.5	6	11	23.5	21	30	49	44	63	+19	+43%

Final Data

The final data collected for the study included the same information as the baseline data. Students again took the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) reading assessment. Again, the previous cores are included in gray to facilitate comparison.

Table 4.6 Baseline and Final MAP Reading Scores

Student #	Actual MAP RIT Score			MAP RIT Range (accounting for margin of error)	
	baseline	final	Δ	Baseline	Final
3	185	187	+2	182-188	184-190
7	197	197	0	194-200	194-200
11	187	187	0	184-190	184-190
12	214	207	-7	211-217	204-210
13	177	190	+13	174-180	187-193
14	187	193	+6	184-190	190-196

MAP reading score data also showed little consistent trend across all participants. Interestingly, however, it appears a number of the trends established by individual students in the non-standardized battery were reiterated by MAP results. Student #3 showed incremental growth. Students #7, #11, and #12 showed little to no progress or decreased. Student #13 again demonstrated a great deal of growth. Student #14 showed no discernable trend from week to week in the non-standardized measures, so it was difficult to correlate to the MAP score.

The final and cumulative results of the non-standardized measures of comprehension are shown in Table 4.7. Note that the second to the last column in this case indicates the percent change between week eight and twelve. The last column, perhaps most importantly, indicates the overall net growth/loss through the course of the treatment, from baseline to week twelve. Trends from that data are discussed on page 52.

Table 4.7 FINAL WEEK Non-Standardized Measures of Comprehension Results

Student #	Retelling				Cloze				Questioning				Overall raw score				%				Score gain/loss % Growth from week 8 to 12	Score gain/loss % Growth from baseline to week 12				
	Week 1	Week 4	Week 8	Week 12	Week 1	Week 4	Week 8	Week 12	Week 1	Week 4	Week 8	Week 12	Week 1	Week 4	Week 8	Week 12	Week 1	Week 4	Week 8	Week 12						
14	7	9	10	7	9	6	9	6	7.5	6	11	7.75	23.5	21	30	20.75	49	44	63	43	-20	-32%	-6	-9%	+22	+61%
13	4	7	8	9	4	4	4	4	4.5	4	5	8	12.5	35	51	46	26	35	51	46	-5	-10%	+20	+77%	-1	-2%
12	7	9	5	8	9	12	8	7	6.25	8	11	7.25	22.25	60	50	48	46	60	42	46	-2	-4%	+2	+4%	+2	+4%
11	7	8	4	4	8	13	8	6.25	10.5	8	11	7.25	21.25	66	42	46	44	66	42	46	+4	+10%	+2	+5%	+4	+5%
7	12	6	5	10	10	14	14	7	7	14	11	7.5	29	56	55	59	60	56	55	59	+4	+7%	-1	-2%	+4	+7%
3	7	5	9	9	8	6	14	2.25	6.75	14	11	7.75	17.25	37	64	58	36	37	64	58	-6	-9%	-6	-9%	-6	-9%

Unlike the MAP reading test data, the comparative data from week eight to week twelve non-standardized testing contradicted earlier trends in many ways. Student #3 fell back after making very impressive growth between weeks four and eight. Student #7 made only slight progress to contradict a trend of decrease. Student #11 also made slight progress after falling in the previous interval. Student #12 fell again. Student #13 saw negative growth for the first time in the course of the study, and Student #14 decreased so as to essentially nullify earlier progress.

Most importantly, however, the final column in which the final scores from week twelve were compared with the baseline results showed overall trends that remained fairly consistent throughout the study and were much more aligned with MAP results. These final comparisons, once again, show Students #7, #11, and #12 making very minimal growth or, in the case of Student #12, a small loss. Student #13 again showed a great deal of growth, and Student #3 continued a growth trend but showed greater growth on the non-standardized measures by far than he/she had on the MAP assessment. Only Student #14 showed an overall net decrease from the beginning to the end of the study on the non-standardized battery whereas he/she had overall gains on the MAP assessment.

Incidental Data

The purpose of the study was to determine the effect, if any, *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program* had on overall reading comprehension in fourth grade English language learners. With this goal in mind, special attention was paid to the data and statistics directly related to reading comprehension. The *Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program*, however, is designed to increase reading fluency.

This goal is based on the assumption that increased reading fluency leads to increased comprehension. Students perform daily timed readings with a partner to measure their fluency, and they graph and track the results of those timings.

Some would argue that fluency and comprehension are codependent and that improvement in one is indicative of improvement in another (Kiley, 2005). For the purpose of this study, however, increased fluency was not viewed as an indicator of increased comprehension. Almost without exception, participants in the study saw a dramatic increase in reading fluency throughout the twelve weeks of the study. Baseline and final reading rates and instructional passage data is shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Reading Levels and CWPM Rates

Student #	Instructional Reading Level		Reading Fluency Score in <u>C</u> orrect <u>W</u> ords <u>p</u> er <u>M</u> inute	
	Week 1	Week 12	Week 1	Week 12
3	Grade 2	Grade 3	122 cwpm	164 cwpm
7	Grade 3	Grade 4	172 cwpm	130 cwpm
11	Grade 3	Grade 4	139 cwpm	137 cwpm
12	Grade 3	Grade 4	155 cwpm	108 cwpm
13	Grade 2	Grade 3	102 cwpm	150 cwpm
14	Grade 3	Grade 3	142 cwpm	113 cwpm

Not only were students able to read more accurately, rapidly, and fluently, but they were able to read more difficult passages with greater accuracy, rate, and fluency (The apparent fall in correct words per minute for some students is due to an increase in the difficulty of the passage. Students were advanced to a higher level passage when

their cwpm exceeded the expected fluency rates for a student in the grade level corresponding to the level of the passage.).

Summary of Overall Growth and Notable Trends

In order to look at the final effects of the program over the course of the entire study and because the week-to-week data fluctuated to such a high degree, I summarized the cumulative results of the study in Table 4.9. Here one can see the percent growth that each participant in the study showed from beginning to end on the standardized, MAP, measure and the non-standardized measures. For final analysis, percent growth shown on both measures were averaged together to get a percent of total growth the student displayed in the study.

Table 4.9 Growth Totals

Student #	MAP RIT Growth Week 1 to Week 12		Non-Standard Score Increase Week 1 to Week 12		Average % Total Growth
	Raw	% Growth	Score increase	% Growth	
3	+2	+1%	+22	+61%	+31%
7	+0	0%	-1	-2%	-1%
11	+0	0%	+2	+5%	-2.5%
12	-7	-3%	+2	+4%	+0.5%
13	+13	+7%	+20	+77%	+42%
14	+6	+3%	-6	-12%	-4.5%

This final analysis yielded the most concrete results. It is clear that Student #3 and Student #13 saw a great deal of growth in comprehension during the course of the treatment. The results, however, suggest that Student #7, #11, and #14, decreased in

comprehension. Given the fact that they all three saw very minimal negative growth, it seems more likely that they actually simply did not grow significantly during the course of the treatment. Student #12 likely did not grow either due to the fact that her growth is extremely minimal.

It is particularly interesting to note that the two students who appeared to benefit most from the treatment were the two who had the lowest baseline scores and the most ground to make up in terms of reading comprehension relative to grade-level benchmarks. This may suggest the *Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program* has the greatest potential to increase reading comprehension among the lowest achievers. On the other hand, the lack of increase for Students #11 and #14, who also started with very low MAP reading scores and showed no significant growth as a result of the treatment, directly contradict the growth of Students #3 and #13.

Discussion Points

Potentially Confounding Influences

There are any number of factors that could influence the results of the study. Whenever one attempts to measure human achievement, results have the potential to be swayed. As alluded to in the discussion of the final data, fluctuations in motivation, the presence or absence of distractions during testing or practice, and variance in interest levels can all impact results.

The steep rise in achievement after the baseline testing could indicate that students were more familiar and comfortable with the tasks the second time around. It could also suggest their motivation was high because they had a previous score upon

which to improve. It could even suggest that the passages they had on that particular week were of higher interest to them and easier to comprehend because of that. This point was further emphasized by the fact that several of the students who showed small amounts of growth appeared to gain interest after the baseline assessment and then lost enthusiasm in the third and/or fourth assessments. Two such examples are Students #11 and #12. Both struggled initially, saw great improvement between week one and week four and then fell back for the remainder of the study so that their overall net was not significant.

The issue of motivation and interest also becomes particularly relevant as one examines the changes in the state of mind of an adolescent learner towards the end of the school year. When the study began, students were still in a learning mindset. Towards the end of the study, the school year was very nearly over. While all students who participated in the study were typically very studious, diligent, and deliberate learners, the weather outside was enticing, and end-of-the-year assemblies, celebrations, concerts, and fieldtrips had the potential to be highly mentally distracting. The fact that many students were improving until the last testing battery seems to reinforce that there could be other factors influencing the results to an unknown degree.

As one examines these trends and data, it is also important to keep in mind that with only six participants in the study, the data is very sensitive to individual variations. One student, for example, was initially very wary of the cassette recorder used to record the oral retellings. That student, Student #13, also happened to be one of the participants whose oral retelling scores more than doubled from the beginning of the study to the end.

Such fluctuations in enthusiasm or comfort levels are hard to combat and must be taken into account when looking at longitudinal studies of student achievement.

On a more individual level, Students #13 and #14 both brought unique factors to the discussion. Student #13, who made great gains throughout the course of study, has an identified learning disability. By definition, reading poses a special challenge for this student. Student #14, who conversely made no growth, has an unusually low IQ and has been tested and referred for Special Education on many occasions throughout the student's elementary career. The student has never qualified because there is not a large enough discrepancy between potential and achievement. None the less, low intelligence has made academic progress a very slow pursuit. In most studies these special case students might be excluded from the data, but the size of the sample group in this study was so small that it was important to include them.

Positive Influences

I have addressed the possible factors that could potentially confound the results of the various assessments. It would be an injustice, however, to discount the number of positive elements that affected the learners during the time covered by this study.

Two of the students made significant progress in the area of reading comprehension in the twelve weeks of the study. It would appear that *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program* contributed to that progress for students who typically were not achieving or progressing at the target levels, but within the limits of this study, it is not possible to rule out the possibility that some other element of the

instruction those students received during the time of the study did not have a contributing or even greater effect than the treatment in question.

From another standpoint, it is possible that the program and resulting fluency improvement simply allowed and encouraged the learners to read more often. In this way, the program would indirectly increase comprehension by increasing the reader's self-confidence and increasing the volume of reading practice outside the classroom. On a related note, it is interesting to see that the student with a learning disability, Student #13, saw such great gains. One must wonder whether some particular aspect of the program's design, be it the security of a daily routine, the collaboration, or some other factor led to this extraordinary improvement. Furthermore, it would be impossible to eliminate the possibility for any of the participants that a thought simply clicked or that a student experienced an unexplainable period of non-typical positive growth independent of what was happening with regards to the study and *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program*.

Concluding Thoughts

With all the potential influencing factors in mind and considering all the information gathered, I feel secure in stating that *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program* in no way negatively affects student comprehension. It is brief and content-based enough to fit unobtrusively into almost any pre-existing curriculum, and it certainly helped students to read increasingly difficult texts with greater fluency. With regards to the question of its effect on reading comprehension in second language learners, however, the results are less encouraging. Two of the lowest students made

significant comprehension progress during the study, but two other of the lowest did not. It would, therefore, be a misrepresentation to suggest that the progress for Students #3 and #13 was solely a result of *The Six Minute Solution*, but it does seem fair to credit at least a portion of this progress to the influence of the specific reading fluency treatment.

The final chapter of this paper will look back at the study as a whole. It will address future questions, connect this study to those included in the Review of Research, suggest related areas of study and research, and offer reflection on the process and my own learning throughout that process and my plans for sharing that learning and insight with the education community as a whole.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The overriding goal of this research was to determine whether *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program*, a structured reading fluency program, could positively effect overall non-fiction reading comprehension in second language learners. Study participants followed the daily routine prescribed by the treatment and were given non-standardized tests of comprehension at the beginning and end of the twelve weeks of the study in addition to at the end of weeks four and eight of the study. Students also took a standardized test of reading comprehension at the beginning and end of the study. Reading fluency increased for all participants. Similar to the results found by Reutzel and Hollingsworth (1993), however, comprehension test results showed mixed results with two of the six participants demonstrating a great deal of growth in comprehension and four of the participants showing minimal growth to as low as apparent loss of comprehension skills, or more likely maintenance of pre-treatment skill levels. Additionally, two of the six participants had identified special needs that likely influenced their results.

I chose the question in the hope that the study would either definitively guide me and other practitioners like me toward another piece of the puzzle in helping English language learners read and comprehend more effectively. The study results, in conjunction with the most current research about general reading instruction and comprehension, lead me to conclude that *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency*

Program is a valuable and minimally intrusive treatment. It most certainly improves reading fluency. It also meets many of the criteria identified by Gersten and Jimenez (1994) as being well-suited to working with ELLs and has the potential to positively effect overall comprehension in English language learners. And while the connection between *The Six Minute Solution* and increased reading comprehension was not made to the extent one might have thought, there are definite benefits to improved fluency alone (Pikulski & Chard, 2005). Among those are many including greater self-esteem and increased reading overall, both of which directly effect English proficiency growth (Kiley, 2005).

Limitations of the Study

Again, it should be emphasized that any conclusions drawn as a direct result of this study need to account for the limitations of the study. I have mentioned several of these in previous chapters but will summarize them in one place again here. The study was designed after a classroom-based research model (Mackey & Gass, 2005). As a result, the participant sample, made up of the students already in the class, was admittedly small. Only six students participated in the study. The study size was limited by the size of the student population in the school and the number of students who qualified for the study based on the criteria described in the Methods Chapter Three. All conclusions are based on that small sample and may not necessarily translate to a larger sample. For this reason, future studies might include similar methods tested on a greater number of students, possibly even students from several different grade levels.

The study timeline was also quite brief. In hindsight, a longer period of study may have led to more reliable trend data and information. *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program* is designed for use throughout the school year. The brevity of the study period potentially limited the opportunity for the fluency practice provided by the program to take full effect. The ability to see trends in assessment data was also limited by the twelve-week duration of the study. Week-to-week fluctuations are normal and would be far less influential on overall results were the study to be spread over a greater number of weeks.

Finally, every effort was made to make the non-standardized measures of comprehension as valid as possible. I felt those measures were a critical aspect of measuring comprehension. They do align closely with more widely-used formal assessments such as the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments in writing, and they provide an opportunity for more curriculum-based and real-world assessment. None the less, all the assessments for the study except the MAP test were independently designed and inherently non-standardized. While I designed them after models published in reliable sources and sought the perspectives of multiple judges in order to eliminate scoring biases to the greatest extent possible, there is a distinct possibility that the difficulty fluctuated from one test to another. In as much as there is value in using multiple scorers to negate the results of bias in scoring, there may be similar value in using a collaborative model for test design with the intent to eliminate bias and fluctuations in difficulty from assessment to assessment.

Future Questions and Implications

Many of the limitations in the previous section point directly to future questions and implications of the study. The results of the study in no way indicate that *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program* has any negative effects on English language learners' reading skills. On the contrary, students were able to read more difficult text more fluently in a very short amount of time, and many researchers have acknowledged the value of increased reading fluency (Gunn, et.al, 2005; Hudson, et. al., 2005; Kiley, 2005; Pikulski & Chard 2005).

Unfortunately, however, the effects of *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program* in this study were no where near dramatic enough to say that fluency practice is *the* missing piece that is keeping so many language learners from comprehending at the level of their native-speaking peers. One may wonder if the program as written could be augmented or modified in some way in order to have a greater impact on ELL comprehension. Instead, it seems the importance of fluency comes from the critical role it plays, in conjunction with all other components, in increasing comprehension.

It would be beneficial to look further into how to integrate and take advantage of the first language skills and oral and cultural attributes the learners bring with them to L2 reading. One might consider placing greater emphasis on punctuation and sentence structures and the role those elements could play in increasing comprehension through fluency practice. It may be of interest to find out whether adding a teacher modeled fluency component, or more consistent echo and/or partner reading opportunities to the

daily routine would increase comprehension. One might also consider whether making a more concerted effort to ensure that the content and vocabulary of the individual's passage was continually revisited throughout the school day and in a variety of contexts rather than only in the practice passage itself would help increase comprehension. The importance of vocabulary instruction needs to be examined and further integrated.

The way the study was designed with periodic comprehension checks would be highly supportive of any such mid-treatment modifications. When comprehension results were not what would have been hoped for, it would have been ideal to change the treatment slightly by adding any one of the elements referred to above to try to better meet the needs of the learners.

In addition to these questions, the study results reiterate what so many practitioners have believed all along. Not only is reading fluency practice not the single missing piece; there may not be one missing piece at all. The increase in fluency in combination with a lack of increase in comprehension reiterates the fact that fluency can occur without comprehension and can easily mask issues of greater concern (Calderon, 2008; Lenters, 2004; Verhoeven, 2000; Woodbury & O'Donnell, 1992). One is left to wonder what it was that led to two of the initially lowest achievers making such outstanding progress while two similarly low achievers did not. Additionally, and perhaps most critically, one also must continually ask what can be done to further accelerate reading comprehension growth for all English language learners.

Communicating the Results

Given the quantity of questions that resulted from the study, it is very fortunate that teaching is not an individual pursuit. This collection of research and discussion can be shared formally with the academic community, but it has already become the topic of many discussions between myself and both my mainstream and ESL teaching colleagues.

Since the completion of the study, we have now seen a new class of ELL fourth graders. Not surprisingly, they display many of the characteristics that were present in the original study group. This time, however, a different ESL teacher has those learners and has implemented a vocabulary instruction treatment. This approach has led the entire team of teachers involved with these students to look carefully and critically at the design of our ELL literacy program in our district.

Mainstream colleagues have also found value in what was learned through this research. At the encouragement of the district Integrated Language Arts (ILA) Committee, several teachers have begun to take an interest in fluency and are working to implement fluency practice in their classrooms. As a result of my research, I have been able to share my own thoughts and ideas about ensuring this practice is well-rounded and focused as much on comprehension as it is on fluency. All of these conversations have given great value to what was learned in the course of my research and study.

Conclusions

Indeed, questions remain. The case could even be made that as many or more questions exist now as when the study began, but that alone could be counted among the benefits of the study. The investigation and results of the study have shed a great deal of

light on future opportunities for investigation into the value of fluency practice in the instruction of English language learners and the role fluency plays in ELL reading comprehension. The study encourages me, and others, to further examine and modify more conventional fluency practices in order to best accommodate the needs of this special group of students. Beyond the scope of fluency, it suggests that same combination of scrutiny and creativity be applied to the application of any reading instruction strategy being offered to English language learners.

The information gained through the study and resulting analysis will be useful to me as well as my mainstream and ESL teaching colleagues as we all work together to improve reading instruction for the English language learners in our district. It is my hope that my synthesis and analysis will also provide useful contributions to the larger conversation that is on-going in all of education as to how to best assist our non-native speakers of English make the academic progress, specifically in the area of literacy that they need to be successful throughout their academic careers.

APPENDIX A

Retelling Rubric

Retelling Rubric

Evaluator's Name: _____

Evaluator's Professional Title: _____

Evaluator's Signature: _____

Please first read carefully through the selected passage. Then read the student's oral retelling/ summary of the passage. Finally, rate the student's summary using the rubric below and record it in the corresponding blank of the judges scoring sheet.

NOTE: A student may only receive a score of 16, 12, 8, or 4. Scores between these numbers are not possible.

Retelling Rubric

16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately retells important concepts from the text in own words. • Organizes the information using appropriate text structure(s) throughout the retelling (e.g. sequential order, classification, cause/effect, compare/contrast, etc.) • Utilizes key vocabulary appropriately. • Synthesizes concepts from the text, using textual evidence and prior knowledge to draw inferences and generate original conclusions.
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains the main ideas and supporting details from the text in own words. • Organizes the information using appropriate text structure (e.g. sequential order, classification, cause/effect, compare/contrast, etc.). • Utilizes some key vocabulary. • Attempts to draw inferences/generalizations and supports them with the textual evidence and prior knowledge (schema).
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a partial understanding of the text, randomly restating facts/concepts, or relying heavily on the author's words. May copy some material from the text. • Organization is less defined; text structure is weak. • May utilize some key vocabulary. • May include inaccuracies or omissions.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relates a limited amount of information, conveying little or no understanding of the text. May copy extensively from text. • Limited use of flow map. • May include some inaccuracies, omissions, or confusions. • May include information that is off topic.

APPENDIX B
Sample Cloze Assessment

Maps: How to Read Them

A map is an important tool. It is not hard to learn to read a map.

There are _____ main directions on a map. They are north, east, _____, and west. The sun rises in the east. It sets in the west. It is easy to find north and south. Point your right hand to the east. Point your left hand to the west. You will be looking at the north. South will be at the _____ of your head. On a map, the _____ is always north. The bottom is always south. The right side is always east and the left is west. To help people remember the directions, there is usually a _____ on the map with “N,” “E,” “S,” and “W” at each of the _____ points. Each _____ stands for one of the directions.

On a world map, the _____ is usually brown, yellow, and green. The brown areas stand for mountains. The yellow areas show the deserts. Green is used to show low areas where many _____ grow. The water areas are _____. Across the middle is a line. This is the equator. This is not a real line. It is put on the world map to show the middle of the _____, where it is hot. In the north and south it is

very _____. These areas are usually white. Sometimes there are red dots on a world map. These usually represent large _____. If there is a very big red dot, the city is very _____. If there is a smaller red dot, the city is smaller_____.

If you know a few simple facts, maps are easy to read. Maps are very useful. People use them to find places and to get _____.

Total raw score for cloze activity:_____

APPENDIX C
Questioning Rubric

Questioning Rubric

Read the questions the student asked at each of the four indicated points within his/her passage (marked by a question mark). Rank each question using the rubrics below. Again, simply choose one of the scores listed and mark it in the appropriate blank on the judges scoring sheet . No partial credit is available.

Score	Type of question	Description
4	scripturally implicit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests information that is not in the text • Question requires the respondent to draw heavily on background knowledge for an answer • Shows evidence of the reader making inferences based on textual clues or relating text to other world situations
3	textually implicit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still requires some level of inference from the respondent • Offers evidence that the reader has linked two parts of the reading by using his/her own background knowledge • May also show evidence of a student drawing a link between one event or fact in the reading and another even though the link was not clearly made in the reading itself
2	textually explicit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires little, if any inference or background information from the respondent • The answer to this type of question is found directly in the words of the text
1	linguistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asks about meaning of a term • Seeks clarification (indicating it was not clear to the reader) • Shows the student was aware of miscomprehension
0	Miscomprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show that the reader did not grasp the meaning of the text • May include questions where reader/questioner confuses people or places or misunderstands figurative language

APPENDIX D

Sample Blank Fluency Records

Sample Blank Fluency Records

Fluency Record

NAME: _____ CLASS: _____

PASSAGE NUMBER: _____

PARTNER: _____ DATE: _____

PASSAGE #	DATE	CWPM								

CWPM = correct words per minute

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