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The Effects of Word Instruction During Classroom Read-Alouds on the Acquisition of Vocabulary

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By

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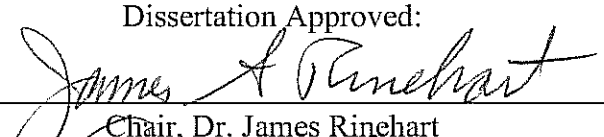

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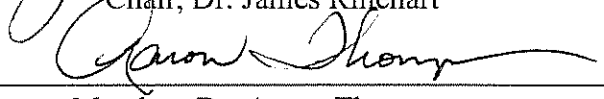

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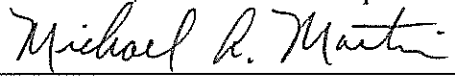

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my second grade teacher,
Amelia Burton,
who encouraged me as a child and an adult
to truly value culture as a means to educate.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my chair, Dr. James Rinehart, for his patience, guidance, and understanding. I would also like to thank Dr. Aaron Thompson for his encouragement of my ideas and inspiration to be creative. Additionally, Dr. Michael Martin and Dr. Deann Allen agreed to support my quest to earn a doctoral degree. They shared their advice and maintained interest in my journey. Cumulatively, these scholars deserve recognition.

My family deserves credit for helping me follow my dreams. They made important decisions with me long before I started the processes described in this document. I share my accomplishments with them. Because of the value that my parents put on my education, I am capable of many things. My brother, who has more knowledge about life than most people, is an amazing individual. I value his understanding that I can strive for anything. My children support me because both of them love adventures.

I would like to share my accomplishments with the faculty and staff of my school. I am fortunate to teach in an environment where educating children is the focus of all efforts. Most of all, the children help me understand that adult efforts are worthwhile in the field of education.

ABSTRACT

To focus on the need to improve literacy in rural Appalachia, this study investigates the use of Text Talk during read-alouds to increase the receptive vocabulary of participants. The researcher read six picturebooks to two groups of kindergarteners. Group A had 21 participants and Group B had 20 participants. Each group received instruction on two different sets of target vocabulary words, three in each book. The researcher administered a pre-test and post-test to each student patterned after the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. T-tests revealed that students made significant progress learning words when the reader used Text Talk during the lessons. When the students did not receive direct instruction on target words, they were unable to identify their meanings in the post-test. The researcher concluded that using Text Talk as a teaching strategy employed during read-aloud with kindergarteners, is an effective way to increase the receptive vocabulary of children.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Differential Item Function----------DIF

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test----------PPVT

Socio-economic Status----------SES

Test of Language Development----------TOLD

Target Word Inventory----------TWI

Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

Words can sing and
Words can cry—
To express our deep feelings
Or reject and deny.
How we use them
Defines our own way
To all those who read
Or hear what we say.
--unknown

Background

The ability to read, write, and communicate through language is a gift for all children. The monumental task comes one word at a time. Words and their meanings have developed over centuries, dating back as far as 3500 B.C. As early as the 7th century B.C., dictionaries, anthologies of words, became prevalent. Historically, the recognition and magnitude of words has continued to increase. As languages around the world developed, the importance for children to acquire vocabulary is more complex. Specifically, learning English is challenging for American youngsters. McCrum, Cran, & MacNeil (1992) stated, "The statistics of English are astonishing. Of all the world's languages, which now number some 2,700, English is arguably the richest in vocabulary with about 1,000,000 words including scientific terms." When one considers these statistics, it is clear that focusing on vocabulary acquisition is relevant.

When considering the breadth of words and the relationship between word meanings to one's ability to comprehend text, the importance of learning new vocabulary is essential. "The National Reading Panel Report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000) summarized decades of scientific research that

clearly shows effective reading instruction addresses five critical areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension" (Learning Point Associates, 2004). These five areas were incorporated into the No Child Left Behind Act. To determine these five components, the National Reading Panel focused decisions based on scientifically based research, studies which employed an experimental design to test the effectiveness of a teaching strategy. In these studies, samples of students were used which represented the national population so the findings would be relevant to schools. Further studies were replicated to build confidence in the results.

The National Reading Panel determined four categories of vocabulary, the words needed to communicate with others, which included: (1) listening, (2) speaking, (3) reading, and (4) writing. For this study, the listening vocabulary of kindergarten children was evaluated. The reason for this focus is due to the important role vocabulary plays in reading comprehension (Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1982; Nagy & Scott, 2000). Although there are many sound strategies to teach the acquisition of new words, reading aloud to students is one way to teach unfamiliar concepts or vocabulary. Even though a great deal of vocabulary is learned indirectly, direct instruction is a key strategy especially for students with less developed oral vocabularies (Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Nicholson & Whyte, 1992). This study focused on direct vocabulary instruction during read-aloud for kindergarten students.

According to Goulden, Nation & Read (1990), the average acquisition rate of native speakers of English is around two to three words per day during one's childhood. This suggests that learning three words during the read-aloud of a selected picturebook is a reasonable goal for youngsters. Biemiller (2003) describes significant differences in

vocabulary acquisition occurring in students by the end of second grade when educators focus on vocabulary instruction. This suggests that setting high standards for the introduction of new words in kindergarten is also an appropriate decision. As Swartzendruber (2007) stated, "Is is essential to begin building vocabulary knowledge when children are young" (p. 177). Biemiller and Slonim (2001) depict a desperate situation for children with a slow pace of word acquisition by the end of third grade as most vocabulary distinctions develop in children prior to this time in life. Thus, creating a study based on the acquisition of new words for young children is important to add to the knowledge base.

Conceptual Underpinnings for the Study

"He that hath not determined ideas to the words he uses, cannot make propositions of them of whose truth he can be certain" (Locke, 1689, p.3). Locke also wrote, "When any term stands for an idea a man is acquainted with, but is ignorant that that term is the sign of it, then another name of the same idea, which he has been accustomed to, may make him understand its meaning" (p. 14). Since the 17th century, scholars suggested that learning new words is a complex process that requires one to take knowledge and use existing ideas to make sense of new learning. Many years later, researchers continued to agree on the importance of vocabulary acquisition at a young age (Biemiller, 2001; Scarborough, 2005). However, there is still an absence of intentional, teacher-directed vocabulary interventions in elementary schools (Baumann, Kame'enui, & Ash, 2003). In order to make the acquisition of new vocabulary possible for kindergarten students, remembering the theories of how one learns is essential.

The conceptual framework for this study focused on developing strong self-efficacy of youngsters. The design centered on the premise of an hourglass. A teacher, a group of individual children and a picturebook join. As the adult reads the book, each word and picture fall from one end of the hourglass to the other like grains of sand. The meanings of the words join in the bottom of the hourglass, accumulating to acquire new understandings similar to the grains of sand. An hourglass only works with human contact much like the conceptualization of thought. Someone must turn the hourglass over and let it begin again. In this scenario, sharing a picturebook is like turning an hourglass over. The tool itself is useful and purposeful; a read-aloud is no different. Human beings must enjoy stories and create ways to make sense of the word around them. A teacher must model strategies needed for youngsters to understand stories making self-efficacy and student achievement possible. The framework for this study involved a richer understanding of the power of read-aloud experiences to increase the receptive vocabulary of young learners. Even though the sand falls through meticulously, the impact is magnificent.

The conceptual design reflected and blended theoretical principles including social learning theory, the theory of learning, and the hermeneutic circle. Three scholars and their work supported the design of this study. As suggested by the work of Albert Bandura (1977), social learning theory focuses on knowledge gained within a social context. A read-aloud experience in a kindergarten classroom provides a social setting for learning as a teacher and students come together to share a book. In support of social learning theory, Jean Piaget's Theory of Learning (Smith, Sarason, & Sarason, 1986) connected to the framework that suggests children take prior learning as a foundation in

order to solve more complex problems. A read-aloud is a perfect stage for this process. Additionally, Charles Taylor (1985) offered a clarification of the hermeneutic circle that theoretically supports the turning of the hourglass or the process children experience when acquiring new words. They need an understanding that individual words or parts of the texts relate to comprehending the whole story; they need to understand the entire story by making sense of its parts. As these three theories connect, one can see the value and connection in the read-aloud experience. In other words, a social setting provides the opportunity for children to take prior knowledge and engage in a practice to cycle new knowledge into their prior experiences in order to learn to read.

Students with strong self-efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves to learn new vocabulary and be more intrinsically motivated to try innovative ideas. As suggested by the work of Albert Bandura (1977), social learning theory focuses on knowledge gained within a social context. As children enter the school setting, they have many opportunities to learn new academic tasks, like learning to read, by socially interacting with their teachers and peers. In turn, educators hope to increase the self-efficacy of each learner.

Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances (p. 391). This suggested that self-efficacy beliefs are more specific than self-concept. For example, if a child says, "I am good at reading," he is stating a general feeling about his self-concept. However, if he says, "I am confident that I know what to do when I am reading and see a word that I do not know," this child is stating that he is capable of organizing and executing what is needed to increase his own vocabulary.

Modeling provides a framework within children that encourages them to learn by observing others. In essence, social learning theory guides the development of self-efficacy in a read-aloud session. By modeling, a teacher can use vocabulary strategies within a read-aloud so that the students can better understand what to do to increase comprehension. Students learn a couple of words during a given book but the goal is much broader; they are learning a strategy to increase self-efficacy. Bandura (1993) reminded readers that "the stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goal challenges people set for themselves and the firmer is their commitment to them" (p. 118). Although young, kindergarten students are people who can begin setting goals and learning to accomplish new things. Having the gift to learn new things and a structure to make sense of the world, will ultimately increase student achievement and give personal responsible for learning. Those involved with schooling need to produce active learners who try to engage in cognitive strategies with content to be learned (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Pajares, 1995). This goal became the motivation for this study.

To understand the social learning theory as it relates to vocabulary acquisition, there are three key elements to be discussed: (1) the teacher, (2) the picturebook, and (3) the child. There must be a marriage of these in order to appreciate the value of a read-aloud experience in providing a model. This requires a rich understanding of the importance of each and goes much deeper than a short lesson happening within the school walls.

Cognitive processes occur during learning. Although an instructor cannot force the gain of knowledge, there are several elements that an effective teacher can take responsibility for while reading to children. A teacher must try to keep the attention of the

learner which is critical for learning. As with social learning, she can become a live model, an actual person who demonstrates to children what needs to be done within the pages of a book in order to make sense of its text. The reader must also model motivation, an ingredient for increasing self-efficacy. In this study, the selection of an interventionist was critical because this person modeled a strategy used by the children themselves when a new word was encountered. It is important that a teacher, the person holding and sharing the book itself, models appropriate behaviors and avoid inappropriate behaviors (Ormrod, 1999). If there is no thought put into the experience and the adult reads without discussion, children will observe a model that decreases their ability to acquire any new vocabulary. This study tested a model to determine if it would increase vocabulary retention.

Orbis Pictus (The World in Pictures), the first picturebook, was written and illustrated by John Amos Comenius in 1657 (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 2008). This creation introduced a gift for children containing three chances to make sense of stories and their words including (1) the text, (2) the illustrations, and (3) the marriage of the two. As authors design picture books, the text tells one story and contains the words needed to describe events. The illustrations, in isolation, give more information and in many cases, tell a separate story. However, the marriage of the text and the illustrations tell yet another, more involved story (Johnson, 2007). This is the way of life itself; people take what they hear and read, blended with experiences through their senses, and gain knowledge. Choosing picturebooks for read-aloud is a process within itself. In this study, the selection process was an integral part of the conceptual framework. It is believed that

part of the model must include appropriate books that encourage the development of self-efficacy of listeners to become high achievers.

Jean Piaget (1989) explained the thought processes of children, giving support to those planning to read a book to children as to why the experience itself is educationally sound.

> The form and functioning of thought are manifested every time the child comes into contact with other children or with an adult….The content, on the contrary, may or may not be apparent and varies with the child and the things of which it is speaking. It is a system of intimate beliefs and it requires a special technique to bring them to the light of day (p.2).

The effect of the read-aloud experience is to give children strategies to make sense of words needed to understand life is the focus. The ultimate goal is to provide students with a process or structure to be use and increase reading proficiency. Helping kindergarteners acquire a few target words is a short-term objective; providing a model for future use when reading, is the long-term hope of these efforts. The framework used for this study centers around children and the power of teaching strategies to encourage self-efficacy within individuals. This study contained a strategy to bring children the *light of day* as suggested by Piaget.

In blending these three elements, the hermeneutic circle seems relevant and supportive. This refers to the theory that understanding that authors create text as a whole by referencing the individual parts and one comprehends each individual part with the whole, thus making a circle (Noakes, 1982). In essence, a child needs to acquire a certain vocabulary word. In order to do so, the reader shares a picturebook containing the word,

the teacher in this scenario. The listener, meaning the child, takes the text and pictures holistically, and begins to make sense one word at a time. However, the ability of a student to understand one word within text relies on the relationship that the word has to the whole story, the big picture. In this study, the entire picturebook experience was required so that kindergarteners could acquire new vocabulary words. However, the children learned the words in context with the whole story.

Using supportive theories, this study surrounded the premise that a read-aloud is much like an hourglass. Elements of a read-aloud experience, including the teacher, the picturebook, and the children, blend together to test a model for learning new vocabulary words. Although each story represents one turn of the hourglass, the impact is much greater. Conceptually, a person turns an hourglass repeatedly much like books read to children. The investigator designed this study to evaluate the use of embedded instruction. However, the researcher intended to make advancements that could increase self-efficacy and empower children to make gains in achievement.

Statement of the Problem

For many years, knowledge that understanding vocabulary words is the most important correlate to reading comprehension has existed (Davis, 1944; Terman, 1916). However, as suggested by Taffe, Blachowicz, and Fisher (2009), one way to view "the vocabulary gap" is the difference between research on high-quality instruction and practice. Additionally, August and Shanahan (2006) reminded readers that many students are economically deprived and lack language proficiency. Like those from rural areas of poverty, struggling learners need the best instruction possible, more of it, sooner, and with intentional supports. The need for more vocabulary instruction practices in

classrooms blended with the charge of giving strategies sooner with more intention suggests that educational researchers and leaders have a problem. This study was an effort to identify a successful teaching strategy to increase the vocabulary for a population of "at-risk" learners located in a rural Kentucky school in the Appalachian area. Many researchers have investigated problems in literacy but educators continue to lack intentional strategies for improving the crucial vocabulary piece of the literacy puzzle. In order to put educationally sound practices into language arts curriculums and offer professional development to the teachers of young learners, researchers need to center on classroom practices. The researcher of this study focused on this crucial dilemma.

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this study was to evaluate the effects of a strategic read aloud technique on the acquisition of vocabulary of Kindergarten students. The researcher selected six picture books containing culturally-relevant target words. The sample included two kindergarten classes in the same school, one with 21 participants and the other with 20 participants. The researcher chose six target words for each book. Both classrooms received the same book during a read-aloud session. However, in one classroom, the reader administered Text Talk on the odd words and the other class received the treatment on the even words. Although the purpose of the study did not include an evaluation of culturally-relevant materials and their impact on vocabulary acquisition, the choice of the researcher to select books surrounding themes, content, and illustrations significant to the population was meant to strengthen the treatment. The investigator gathered pretest and posttest scores, using a vocabulary assessment, to

determine if the type of instruction used during the planned, oral reading of chosen books effects the acquisition of vocabulary. The researcher rationalized using quantitative measures due to the use of pretest and posttest scores.

Definitions of Key Terms

To understand the essential components of this study, several key terms need clarification. The selected definitions are relevant to the conceptual confines of the study. Although several terms may have a variety of definitions available in the literature, the definitions chosen seem appropriate for the study and the intentions of the researcher.

Rural Appalachia. The participants for this study reside in the Rural Appalachia region of Kentucky. As suggested by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), they categorize Kentucky's Appalachian counties in the Central Appalachia sub-region. As of 2002, the counties in this state fall into the lowest two of four categories that describe levels of economic status—distressed or transitional. Distressed counties are the most economically deprived counties in Appalachia at 1.5 times the national average of unemployment rates. Transitional counties are at risk of becoming "distressed" with rates of unemployment at least 1.25 times the national average. The other two categories include competitive and attainment counties. Competitive counties equal the national average and attainment counties have an unemployment rate less that the national average; neither of these categories include Kentucky counties. The counties included are as follows: Adair, Bath, Bell, Boyd, Breathitt, Carter, Casey, Clark, Clay, Clinton, Cumberland, Edmonson, Elliott, Estill, Fleming, Floyd, Garrard, Green, Greenup, Harlan, Hart, Jackson, Johnson, Knott, Knox, Laurel, Lawrence, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Lewis, Lincoln, McCreary, Madison, Magoffin, Martin, Menifee, Metcalfe, Monroe,

Montgomery, Morgan, Nicholas, Owsley, Perry, Pike, Powell, Pulaski, Robertson, Rockcastle, Rowan, Russell, Wayne, Whitley, and Wolfe (http://www.arc.gov/index.do). Figure 1, from the web page, visually explains the economic status of Rural Appalachia.

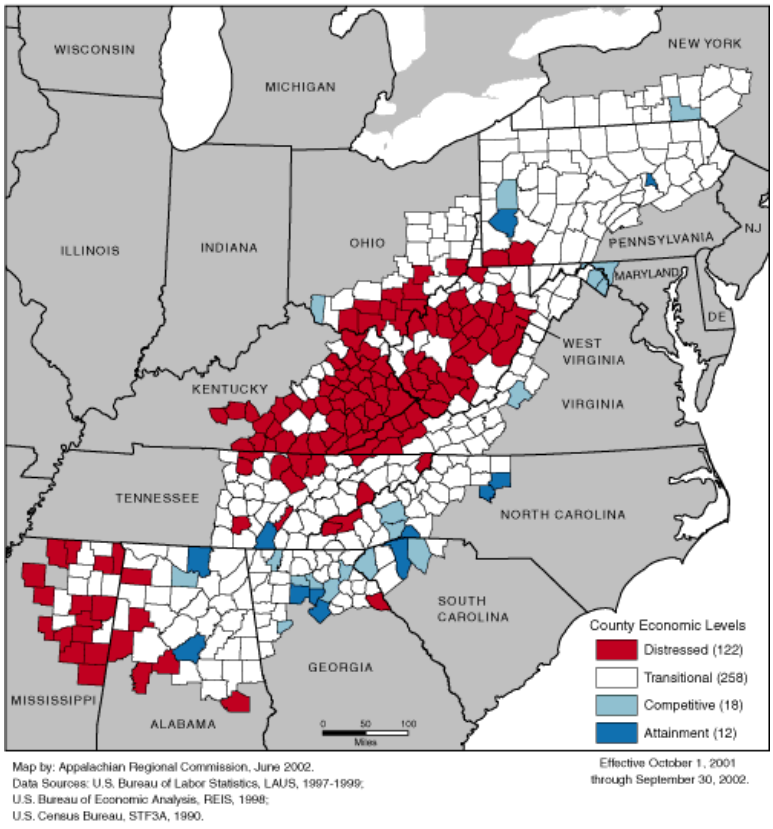

Figure 1. Map of Appalachia

Read-aloud. For the purpose of this study, a read-aloud is a classroom activity which involves a teacher, also referred to as an interventionist, the reader, or an instructor, reading a selected picturebook aloud to a group of children (Smolkin & Donovan, 2001; Wiesendanger, 2001). This is not to be confused with the following: (1) audio books, which are audio-recordings of picturebooks played on a CD player, etc. or (2) interactive books, designed as computer-assisted programs that show the pictures on the computer screen and give audio readings of text. The setting for read-alouds in this study included a teacher holding an individual copy of a picturebook and children sitting

in close proximity so that the pictures are visible. Other terms encountered in literature and used in conjunction with read-aloud include shared picture book reading (Whitehurst et al., 1988), storybook reading sessions (Justice, Meier, & Walpole, 2005), and interactive book read-aloud (Bortnem, 2008). The term, read-aloud, is hyphenated when it is an adjective or a noun (International Reading Association Style Guide- http://www.reading.org/styleguide/alpha_pqr.html).

Picturebook. Lawrence Sipe (1998) stated that picturebooks "are unified artistic wholes in which text and pictures, covers and endpages, and the details of design work together to provide aesthetically satisfying experience for children." To support his notion, Stewig (1995) described picturebooks as books in which illustrations comprise a fundamental part of a story. For this study, the writer used one-word spelling as the compound spelling symbolizes the image interaction, the harmony of words and pictures and makes a distinction from books with pictures (Matulka, 2008; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001, 2006; Sipe, 1998). The picturebooks used in the study contain 32-40 pages and at least one illustration per page.

Vocabulary acquisition. As the definitions surrounding what is meant by vocabulary acquisition are numerous, this study focused on the receptive vocabulary acquired by the participants. By definition, receptive vocabulary includes familiar words understood when they occur in reading material or heard in conversation (Morgan & Oberdeck, 1930). This does not necessarily mean that a child would be able to use a word in his receptive vocabulary in speech or writing. For this project, children selected the picture that best represents a given word, testing the receptive knowledge of the word. Learning a word within a read-aloud experience means that after listening to a book, the

child can match a word with a picture but may not be able to produce a sentence containing the word. This demonstrates a higher-level expressive ability.

Incidental exposure. Robbins and Ehri (1994) suggested that children learn word meanings two ways, through direct and explicit definitions provided by adults and through incidental encounters. These authors defined incidental exposure as experiences that "include hearing words in conversations, on television, and in stories. In these situations, word meanings may not be expressed or accessible. Therefore, children who encounter new words incidentally must use indirect contextual and implicit information to discern meanings" (p. 54). During read-alouds, incidental exposure means that the adult reads words as they occur in the text without explanation of their meanings. Incidental exposure to half of the target words became the control element in this study.

Interventionist. This term is synonymous with *teacher* in this study. As an individual delivers a treatment designed to improve word vocabulary, the interventionist is the person responsible for the delivery. Other words used for this person include instructor, reader, and educator. After taking many elements of this study in consideration, the interventionist selected for this study is the researcher herself. This decision included her experience and many years of service as a kindergarten teacher. To make sure that the treatment was correct and fair to both kindergarten classes, the researcher became the interventionist during the read-aloud settings. This also increased the reliability and validity of the treatment itself.

Vocabulary gap. Taffe, Blachowicz, and Fisher (2009) defined the vocabulary gap as the difference between research and practice of those in the field. These authors suggest that vocabulary gaps exist in the nation's youngsters but defining the gap as it

relates to educators is an important focus. August and Shanahan (2006) echoed this concern by suggesting that there are gaps between the ways teachers offer vocabulary instruction to those from poverty. These authors believe that struggling learners need the best instruction possible and closing the vocabulary gaps starts with strong teaching. For this study, gaps are defined as the differences between what research informs educators to do and what is actually done in classrooms, focusing on rural areas where poverty levels are high.

Limitations and Assumptions

Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006) define limitations as any "aspect that the researcher knows may negatively affect the results of the study but over which the researcher has no control" (p. 83). For this study, four limitations warrant discussion—length of the study, physical classroom environment, the researcher as the interventionist and readiness of children to listen to a story. The researcher is currently responsible for her own kindergarten classroom. She needed to complete six read-alouds, pretesting and post-testing in an eight-week period. This comprised only one school day for pretesting all participants that included scheduling conflicts as the students needed to go to physical education class and lunch. In addition, on six other days, the researcher had to complete a read-alouds in both classrooms and posttest all participants on the six target words included in each book. Optimally, the researcher allowed two whole days on each book, one day in each class. By nature, young children seem to be more engaged in the morning prior to lunch.

As the investigator needed to stay in the classrooms with individuals when testing, the physical classroom was not conducive to this arrangement. At a small desk in

the corner of the classroom, the children were post-tested. The noise level in the classrooms made this experience difficult at times. In addition, the other activities going on around the individual receiving the test were distracting. On many occasions, the researcher had to redirect the youngsters and encourage them to focus on giving honest answers on the post-test. The pretests occurred in the same setting. By rearranging the testing chairs, some distractions became minimal but not eliminated.

A unique feature of this study included the decision for the researcher to become the interventionist for the read-alouds. Since the researcher is a veteran kindergarten teacher, the decision to use herself as the reader for the read-aloud experiences may have created a limitation. In many studies, the regular classroom teacher, graduate assistants, and others read the books and completed the treatment. However, the choice to have the researcher conduct the read-alouds increased reliability and validity issues. This is a limitation because the reader made decisions at the site based on experience. An example included the decision of the researcher to abort the first lesson and reschedule the reading due to the inexperience of the children to sit quietly and engage in a story. Although this unique connection could strengthen the study, it was a possible limitation. The researcher had difficulty separating the two roles.

If children do not have prior experiences in a group read-aloud setting, their readiness to listen can become a limitation of a study involving this activity. In other words, if they do not know how to sit together, remain quiet, and look at the teacher or book, a limitation arises. Classroom management strategies or the lack thereof, was a limitation as prior experiences were out of the researcher's control. This is a unique limitation but seemed relevant to this particular study. Although the researcher made

some changes to the typical expectations of the group of children, she believed that the inexperience of the subjects to participate in a meaningful, systematic, explicit lesson was another limitation.

According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006), assumptions are "any important *fact* presumed to be true but not actually verified. For this study, the researcher assumed that the participants had never heard any of the six read-aloud book selections. Additionally, the investigator assumed that they had not received *Text Talk* strategies in any read-aloud settings with their teachers. The researcher also assumed that these students had never received any form of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test suggesting that the participants would need direction instruction related to selecting one of four pictures that best describes a given word.

Summary

The International Reading Association (IRA) in conjunction with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) emphasized that a young child must receive a foundational knowledge in language acquisition and early literacy development (Newman, Bredekamp, & Copple, 2000). Additionally, young children from disadvantaged backgrounds enter kindergarten with half as many words as a typical child from a high socio-economic status (SES) (Stanovich, 1986). Knowing the importance of early language development and considering the needs of rural Appalachian children, most of which are living in households with low SES levels, leads one to believe that research surrounding the acquisition of vocabulary is crucial. If strategies are identified that increase the vocabulary during the crucial age of kindergarteners, the chances rise for these youngsters to become proficient in reading.

The researcher investigated if one strategy, *Text Talk*¸ could increase the acquisition of target vocabulary when embedded into read-aloud sessions. Although each grain of sand falling through an hourglass seems minute, it is essential. One strategy applied to only three words in six pieces of children's literature is a small step. However, finding out ways to improve the number of words young children know is a huge leap for literacy. In areas of Kentucky, nestled in the Appalachian Mountains, children from poverty ride buses to small schools spread throughout this region. Making an effort to bring research to practice for these students was the premise of the following study.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

As suggested by the National Reading Panel, the common goal of the U.S. Department of Education, all fifty states, and local school districts is that all children will read on or above grade level by the end of the third grade. Whatever is necessary, achieving this goal is paramount. Adams (1990) reminded scholars that

> Even before children enter grade school, we must become universally committed to developing their appreciation of and familiarity with text. We hug them, we give them treats and good things to eat; we try to teach them to be clean and polite, good natured, thoughtful, and fair. We do these things because it is the best way we know to set them off on happy, healthy lives. We must do as much with reading. In our society, their lives depend on it (p. 91).

An integral piece to their success is the development of vocabulary. Recent studies suggested that the vocabulary of young children is a strong predictor of future reading levels and may have long-term consequences for student success in the classroom (Senechal & LeFevre, 1998; Senechal et al., 1998; Ewers & Brownson, 1999). Unfortunately, there is not a uniform effort to teach vocabulary in kindergarten classrooms. For example, Juel, Biancarosa, Coker, and Deffes (2003) discussed the variance from classroom to classroom in the amount or strength of vocabulary work. These authors evaluated kindergarten teachers and found that some did no vocabulary instruction at all and others worked on teaching new words up to 46% of their literacy time. They also suggested that no systematic vocabulary instruction was determined; the efforts of the teachers were self-created. Although honorable to observe teachers making

effort, those involved with schooling can do better by establishing concrete procedures to enrich vocabulary. Educators owe the ability to make good choices to the nation's youngsters to insure better futures and use efficient systems.

Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, and Watts-Taffe (2006) described a comprehensive, integrated, school-wide approach to teaching vocabulary. These authors defined *integrated* to mean that "vocabulary is a core consideration in all grades across the school" (p. 526); *comprehensive* means that "vocabulary instruction encompasses much more than a list of words" (p. 527). Researchers provided convincing evidence to support the use of several approaches to teaching new words during a read-aloud, but the literature lacks specific recommendations that teachers can take into the classroom. Theoretically, there is evidence for concentrating on vocabulary development but concretely, little has been done to inform teachers as to what to do and how to do it.

Along with the complexity of understanding how children acquire new words and understanding meanings, much debate centers on ways teachers can improve this process. Given the importance that language plays in the improvement of literacy, finding strategies and interventions for building vocabulary is critical (Hargrave & Senechal, 2000). One such opportunity is reading storybooks aloud to young children leading to reliable gains in word acquisition (Eller, Pappas, & Brown, 1988; Beck & McKeown, 2001; McGee & Schickedanz, 2007). The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of instruction during read-alouds on the vocabulary acquisition of kindergarten children in Rural Appalachian schools.

This literature review analyzed research related to the design of this study. The first two sections offer an understanding of the theories guiding this inquiry and an

overview of the historical perspectives surrounding vocabulary so that readers can acquire an understanding of the relevance of studying vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, this chapter includes a review of literature used to guide the plans surrounding the design of the study and contains the following: (1) Vocabulary Knowledge and Acquisition, (2) Vocabulary Instruction and Read-Aloud, (3) Selection of Books, (4) Selection of Target Words, and (5) Vocabulary Assessment. These five components vary greatly when examining the literature and appear to be the backbone to the design of the study. Each of these components is important but the combination brings uniqueness to many studies, including this one.

After examining these five elements, a discussion of the related literature surrounding the methodology follows. An overview of literature regarding the grade level of the participants is included. The researcher reviewed independent and dependent variables. The researcher included an explanation of the unique design concerning treatment and control groups.

At the end of the review, a discussion of the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy is included. Although this study did not test the effectiveness of planning lessons that are culturally conscious, the literature supported keeping culture in mind when designing any lessons for any group. The investigator considered the six picturebooks selected for this study as culturally responsive materials for the participants from rural Appalachia. The researcher felt that this warranted a review of what literature suggests is culturally responsive pedagogy.

Theories Underlying the Conceptual Development of Study

When Charles Taylor (1979) described the hermeneutic circle, one trying to conceptualize a study about the teaching of vocabulary should be intrigued. As he described reading a whole text, Taylor discussed the understanding of each part by a reader. He then depicted the importance that each detail has in the comprehension of the whole story. Thus, a circle is created—whole to part, part to whole. When planning to teach new vocabulary words to children, the hermeneutic circle seemed relevant. As stated by Laszlo (2008), "Since the meaning of parts depends on the meaning of the story as a whole, but the story as a whole is dependent on the meaning of its component parts, hermeneutic interpretation is inescapable" (p. 16). This circle applies to all pieces of literature. However, in order to truly understand and comprehend text, youngsters must know the words and their meanings. Taylor reminded readers that dealing with meaning suggest that things must make sense. The hermeneutic circle is a theoretical foundation for a read-aloud in that the whole story can only be understood one word at a time; one word is meaningless without the whole story.

Additionally, Albert Bandura (1986) added to the acquisition of knowledge. He believed that the school functions as the place where children acquire the knowledge and problem-solving skills required for effectiveness in the larger society. Literacy is essential in the entirety of one's success in the creation of self-efficacy. Reading is the key to believing that someone can learn anything; if you can read, you can become powerful. Bandura discussed the importance of teacher self-efficacy. In essence, the task of creating learning environments where students learn the skills needed to make sense of the world depends on the abilities of teachers. Read-alouds, although only one part of an

educational setting, are avenues to instill the thought into children that comprehending words can lead to a better understanding of the world via print. In reflection of Bandura's advice, one may view the power of vocabulary as an essential tool. With this gift, students can begin to believe that they can become literate individuals of society, thus creating self-efficacy. According to Bandura, if teachers believe that they are capable of teaching students relevant information, students believe in themselves. When reading the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994), one may observe a comparison between cultural consciousness and self-efficacy. In other words, no matter where someone comes from, he/she can combat life with knowledge and discover the things needed to give change.

Further thinking about the acquisition of knowledge came from Jean Piaget (1964). Although Piaget was a biologist who studied mollusks, he moved into the development of children. He offered scholars an insight into the role of maturation in the way that children understand their world. When focusing on kindergarteners, Piaget suggested that learning to use language and represent objects by images and words is crucial for this age (Smith, Sarason, & Sarason, 1986). Piaget (1964) described the difference between the development of knowledge and learning. He stated, "Development is a process which concerns the totality of the structures of knowledge" (p. 176). Piaget implied that learning is the opposite process. "In general, learning is provoked by situations…by a teacher." A teacher, conducting a read-aloud with the intention of teaching new vocabulary words, supports the Theory of Learning. In the single event of listening to a story, a child may learn something new. Eventually, this information leads to the development of knowledge, which occurs throughout an entire childhood. This theory seemed relative when comparing the importance of read-alouds

and the development of language. Teachers must believe that each book or each word contribute to the building of the whole child. Piaget (1964) reminded readers of this powerful opportunity.

Historical Perspectives on Vocabulary and Instruction

One of the oldest lines of research in literacy described the strong connection between readers' vocabulary knowledge and their ability to comprehend text (Davis, 1944, 1968; Terman, 1916). Educators hold discussion concerning how unfamiliar vocabulary makes reading difficult. Since the entire purpose of reading is to understand the words of others, comprehending text relies on knowing what the words mean. Those involved with schooling agree that vocabulary acquisition is critical in order to learn to read and researchers argued on this point for many years (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2006).

From research results, the literature revealed several key points. Some youngsters start school with a large vocabulary base. However, many begin with limited knowledge of vocabulary (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001). Hart and Risley (1995, 2003) estimated that children from poverty know about half as many words as their upper-class peers. Regardless of socioeconomic backgrounds, children vary greatly in the knowledge of words and meanings that they bring to school (Huttenlocher, Haight, Bryk, Seltzer, & Lyons, 1991; Blachowiczet et al., 2006). As educators worry about achievement gaps and closing them, the need to focus on the vocabulary gap is relevant. The vast difference of the amount of vocabulary acquisition for children affects reading across the curriculum and influences the success of children indefinitely.

The history of research regarding vocabulary instruction is not as clear. From the 1950's through the 1970's, how to teach children vocabulary was sparsely a topic of

studies (Dale, Razik, & Petty, 1973). In the first Handbook of Reading Research, only a few pages were devoted to research on vocabulary (Pearson, Kamil, Mosenthal, & Barr, 1984). Becker (1977) changed the pendulum when he suggested that a major school failure of disadvantaged children was inadequate vocabulary knowledge. His introduction in research caused researchers to begin looking at the effect of vocabulary acquisition and appropriate instruction to improve the ways children learn new words.

The second Handbook of Reading Research (Barr, Kamil, Mosenthal, & Pearson, 1991) contained two chapters dedicated to topics surrounding vocabulary. One chapter dealt with vocabulary processes (Anderson & Nagy, 1991) and the other chapter focused on vocabulary development (Beck & McKeown, 1991). Many other handbooks published thereafter contained new research surrounding vocabulary progression. An example included the revised Handbook of Research on Teaching (Calfee & Drum, 1986). As educators became aware of the need to teach vocabulary to young children, researchers attempted to offer practitioners interpretations to increase the effectiveness of instruction. Historically, those involved with schooling have become aware of the importance of the vocabulary acquisition to young readers and the need to find effective strategies for teachers is evident. In 2000, the National Reading Panel recognized vocabulary as one of the five essential components of reading as based on extensive research (Snow, 2002). More work needs to be done surrounding the best instructional practices, leading the researcher in this study to investigate whole group read-alouds using extended instruction based on selected target words for kindergarten students, particularly those from backgrounds saturated with poverty and language delays.

As time marched on, developing the vocabulary of the nation's youngsters became more prevalent in the eyes of educators. However, as the importance of this need grew, the passing of time has brought new challenges. The schools in the United States welcomed new cultures suggesting that the teaching of English vocabulary words is more crucial than ever before. Learning to read is more complex and the process relies on all of the young learners to understand the words they encounter.

Vocabulary Knowledge and Acquisition

Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, and Watts-Taffe (2006) suggested that attention to vocabulary is paramount. This group of researchers believed that vocabulary knowledge is one of the most significant predictors of reading success. They also recognized the presence of gaps of vocabulary knowledge between socioeconomic groups. Blachowicz et al. combined this knowledge with the effects of vocabulary knowledge across the entire school curriculum as reasons to support the emergent need for vocabulary research.

In their preschool years, youngsters learn new words at a quick rate. One estimate was that children learn about five new words each day from 18 months to six years old (Carey, 1978), which adds up to over 10,000 words before completing kindergarten. Stanovich (1986) found that children from disadvantaged backgrounds come to kindergarten with half as many words in their repertoire as the kids from a typical advantage. Hart and Risley (1995) suggested that by age four, children from families with high socioeconomic status (SES) are exposed to thousands more words than children from low-SES families. Regardless of backgrounds, children must acquire vocabulary in order to succeed in reading. If not, the negative results are long-term and detrimental to students and their achievements.

Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) suggested that the study of emergent literacy must include the domain of language, meaning vocabulary. Other researchers alluded to the same understanding but there were considerable debates about the size and rate of vocabulary and about how vocabulary is acquired (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001). Recent work suggested that examining the kinds of words is also relevant. Angline (1993) makes clear distinctions between root words, derived words, inflections and compounds. According to this work, knowing root words aides in the understanding of the other three types of words. This awareness is a key factor in understanding that vocabulary knowledge is crucial so that kindergarteners can learn 7,500 root words by fifth grade. If children enter school with vocabulary deprivation, in essence, they begin behind and stay behind which negatively affects all reading progress (Biemiller & Slonim).

Early differences in vocabulary growth, even at pre-literacy times of life, are associated with social class (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; Hart & Risley, 1995). Debates also center on the effect that instruction can have to improve these crucial rates. Since many words are part of a child's vocabulary base prior to entering school, it may seem that the task of increasing the vocabulary of disadvantaged students is too difficult by the young age of five. Cantalini (1987) and Morrison, William, and Massetti (1998) reported that the school experience has little effects on the improvement of vocabulary as they tested kindergarten and first graders. However, Huttenlocher, Levine, and Vevea (1998) suggested that early instructional techniques have long-term benefits for students through grade 12 as they evaluated progression over time. Purcell-Gates, McIntyre, and Freppon (1995) conducted a study whose data suggested that students entering school with low levels of knowledge can catch up if instructed properly.

Although a discrepancy exists, educators must believe they can improve vocabulary after youngsters enter school. Overall, it appears possible that children in kindergarten and first grade do have the potential to increase their vocabularies with extreme adult interaction. Thus, good teaching became the focus.

The debate centered around the variance in language making it become difficult to measure a common grade level vocabulary (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001). Researchers offered different information on the amount of words, the kind of words, and the effect of word acquisition. There was consensus that all children must acquire vocabulary in order to become effective readers (Barclay, 2009; Wagner, Muse, & Tannenbaum, 2007; Mulatti, Reynolds, & Besner, 2006; Smolkin & Donovan, 2001; Biemiller, 2003; Beck, McKeown, Sandora, Kucan, & Worthy, 1996).Historically, a research cycle evolved—first, recognizing that word acquisition is crucial and then deciding how to accomplish the goal. Then, with progress on one strategy, researchers revisited the task and the cycle continued. It is disturbing that educators are still unsure of what is the best strategy for children in the classroom and lack professional development as the debates continued. Research exists surrounding this dilemma, but those in the field often seem confused as to best practices. Although investigators seem to agree and educators show awareness, strategies used do not reflect a clear understanding of the process children encounter to learn new vocabulary.

Vocabulary Instruction and Read-Alouds

Leo Lionni, author and illustrator, published at least 40 children's books cherished by children and adults across the world. As quoted in the 1984 Horn Book Magazine,

> One of the most important…is the picture book. For it is there that the child will have his first encounter with a structured fantasy, mirrored in his own imagination and animated by his own feelings and imagery. It is there that, through the mediation of an adult reader, he will discover the relationship between visual and verbal language (Day, 1996).

The read-aloud is supportive of the theoretical importance of modeling and providing children social settings in which to learn. It is through the sharing of a picturebook with a group of eager youngsters that a teacher has a magical opportunity to make a difference by telling children about words (Bus, van Ijzendorn & Pellegrini, 1995, Elley, 1989, Robbins & Ehri, 1994). There are many reasons why an adult reads a book to children. One reason is simply to provide entertainment to the group. Most people would agree that listening to a story and watching the pictures go by is engaging. Another reason teachers read books is to give students an opportunity to hear a reader make voice inflections and view the story as it "comes to life". However, teachers employ different strategies when planning a read-aloud for teaching new vocabulary words to children (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007). These authors discussed the need for scientifically based instructional practices needed to "boost the value of reading aloud to young children" (page 742). It appears that there are many reasons *why* to conduct a read-aloud in a kindergarten classroom, but *how* to make the experience meaningful for teaching new vocabulary words still warrants investigation.

Researchers agreed that a read-aloud is an excellent opportunity for children. However, the expertise needed by an adult reader to make that experience a teachable opportunity remains in question. There are so many dilemmas faced by those involved

that include the struggle to determine the strategy of choice, the books and target words featured, and the frequency of read-alouds needed to make a difference in vocabulary acquisition. Studies have shown that children can make gains in the acquisition of vocabulary during read-aloud sessions but there are discrepancies as to what the instructors need to do to make the most of the experience. Silverman (2007) stated, "There are few experimental investigations of vocabulary instruction methods" (page 99). Ironically, the educational jargon related to teaching vocabulary during read-alouds is vast. Educators need lessons with these words as often as children need lessons with their words.

For example, Dickinson and Smith (1994) suggested that the *analytical* style of reading is best; Juel, Biancarosa, Coker, and Deffes (2003) suggested that *anchored* instruction is best. Silverman (2007) referenced an approach called *extended instruction.* Coyne, McCoach, and Kapp (2007) compared *extended instruction* to *embedded instruction* and *incidental exposure*. Blachowicz & Obrochta (2007) used *Vocabulary Visits Procedure* in their study. Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) combined several of the above-mentioned types of instruction into a strategy entitled *Text Talk*. Although there are commonalities between all of the methods of instruction, there are many differences. Deciphering past research to find the one best method is confusing but may suggest that there is not a "best" method. Those involved with schooling may need to consider fitting the method to the population or the expected learner outcomes. Suggesting that one researcher is right over the other may explain why classroom practices waiver and textbook series lack pungency. One unarguable common thread is the importance of the reader.

Robins and Ehri (1994) strongly reiterated that the effect of vocabulary acquisition, thus reading growth, depends on how often an adult reads to a child. In addition, DeTemple and Snow (2003) believed that the style used by the adult reader can affect the word gains made by the child. The combination of frequent read-alouds and direct instruction during the book sharing increases the vocabulary of the listeners. The choice made by the teacher regarding how to instruct the children is crucial. Researchers experimented with several ways to deliver instruction on new words during read-aloud lessons.

To understand the dilemmas surrounding the use of read-aloud to enhance vocabulary acquisition, one must also consider prior knowledge. What do students bring or not bring to the classroom? *The Matthew Effect* is the reality that a child with a strong vocabulary base will learn new words easier than his classmates who come to school with lesser knowledge (Stanovich, 1986). Blachowicz and Obrochta (2007) stated,

> It has been suggested that this effect is especially significant in relation to content area vocabulary--not knowing what *circle* is makes it more difficult for a student to understand and learn new terms like *diameter, radius* and *circumference.* Learners need 'anchor' concepts and vocabulary to learn new words which are then connected to the concepts they already know (p. 140).

To piggyback on this thought, using culturally relevant vocabulary as a springboard to learning new words makes it possible for some students to learn, specifically the rural population living in poverty.

Type of instruction.

As educators of young students scramble to find ways to improve the knowledge base of words, there has become a piecemeal approach to instruction. One substantial thought is that some vocabulary instruction given to youngsters is better than none (Dale, Razik, & Petty, 1973). In other words, it is essential that educators provide opportunities for learners to acquire some knowledge of words. McKeown and Beck (1990) noted that if the rate of vocabulary acquisition is seemingly smaller than it should be, it is appropriate to assume that instructional approaches can increase vocabulary acquisition. Although educators know that the relevance of vocabulary to comprehension is strong, finding strategic ways to teach new vocabulary words has been a topic of research for years but still lacks substantial progress in the classroom (Anderson & Freebody, 1981; Anderson & Nagy, 1991; Baker, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1998). In trying to determine the most effective way to handle a read-aloud, more investigation needs to occur.

Repeated readings.

The work of Biemiller and Boote (2006) alluded to repeated readings of the same book as a possible technique for encouraging the acquisition of words. Several researchers (Biemiller, 2003; McGee & Schickedanz, 2007) recommended repeated readings of one story with an explanation of 5-10 words per text. Robbins and Ehri (1994) suggested that the same storybook twice, 2-4 days apart, increases vocabulary. McGee and Schickedanz offered a more specific plan for reading the books three times each with a strategy for each reading. Hickman, Pollard-Durodola, and Vaughn (2004) included a spin on repeated readings as they suggest that readers reread only key paragraphs or passages. In all of these studies, researchers agreed that repeating a given

story at least once strengthens the ability of the students to recognize certain target words and simply repeating showed significance when tested.

Extended instruction.

All agree that simply reading aloud to children is not sufficient effort and that there must be an interactive plan for all components--the teacher, the students, the book, the words, and the strategy of choice. The thought behind extended instruction is to teach vocabulary words before a read-aloud and review words after the read-aloud is complete. This model often involves days of effort on a given set of words. There is limited research on extended instruction in the primary grades; most work has been features grades 3 and above. Most likely, this is due to the complicated nature of extended instruction as it involves using other sources, like dictionaries, to define target words. For kindergarteners, this method does not appear to be age-appropriate. Although the teacher could do extended activities with the children to encourage vocabulary growth, it is too difficult for non-readers to handle the demands of extended instruction.

In addition, incidental exposure to words during read-alouds does not lend positive results. Simply reading a book without teaching certain target words does not improve the receptive vocabulary of youngsters (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). This approach does not seem substantive enough to boost vocabulary. Once again, the literature supported the use of a systematic, explicit method in kindergarten and first grade classroom (Juel, Biancarosa, Coker, & Deffes, 2003).

Coyne, McCoach, and Kapp (2007) conducted a couple of studies focusing on this type of instruction. In one project, they compared extended instruction to incidental exposure. In other words, does directly teaching word meanings help students master

target words or will they gain word meaning when the words occur incidentally without a lesson or discussion? Of course, data suggested that students learn significantly more words with extended instruction. In their second study, they compared extended instruction to embedded instruction. This meant that some students received instruction on certain words before the readings of books; others received instruction on the words during the read-aloud sessions. The results were different than study one. Although extended instruction seemed significant, embedded instruction also had value. Students' receptive vocabulary skills were strong even with embedded instruction, although they weaken when expressing the meanings of words compared to extended instruction. Key reasons that a kindergarten teacher would select embedded instruction include that time restraints limit instruction and this choice requires less instructional time. Another reason is that many schools from high levels of poverty are under federal mandates and teachers may not feel permitted to vary from scripted programs. Since all programs encourage read-aloud, this strategy could still be employed without straying from chosen curriculums. A review of the literature supported this concern.

De Temple and Snow (2003) made a comparison between talk during shared picturebook reading that is cognitively challenging and discussion that is not. Whitehurst, Zevenberg, Crone, Schultz, Velting, and Fischel (1999) wrote about "dialogic reading". Researchers defined this as a teacher involving students during a read-aloud in discussion that produces significant word learning. In this way, the teacher scaffolds the process by asking critical questions, adding information, or getting students to describe the text in their own words. Ironically, research suggested that this type of instruction, scaffolding, might be more crucial to students who lack vocabulary or do not learn new words easily.

This type of learner is less likely to learn vocabulary incidentally and needs strategic, well-designed instruction to maximize the acquisition of vocabulary during read-alouds (Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Senechal, Thomas, & Monker, 1995). Students from areas of poverty who enter kindergarten with low language levels would benefit from instruction that scaffolds words in text with instruction on their meanings (Hart & Risley, 1995).

Vocabulary Visits.

Fisher, Flood, Lapp, and Frey (2004) conducted an analysis of the practices of teachers when reading aloud to children. Their work focused on determining a common set of practices that teachers do to implement the teaching of vocabulary within a read-aloud. Blachowicz and Obrochta (2005) followed the work of Fisher et al. with a method that "tweaked" their findings. Vocabulary Visits are modifications of the standard practices of teachers. It included procedures like group talk, where students would discuss key terms prior to the reading. This strategy also included semantic sorting and writing activities. It falls under the category of extended instruction discussed by prior authors. The work of Blachowicz and Obrochta also focused on the use of informational text versus fictional picturebooks. One must consider the overall goals prior to a read-aloud. If the goal is to learn four scientific terms, using an informational book seems appropriate. However, it the reader is working on how vocabulary relates to comprehending a story, the use of fictional text for young children would be a better choice. Vocabulary Visits appeared to be a strategy worth for elementary teachers in content work. For the study connected to this review, it did not seem to be the best choice based on the age-appropriate needs of kindergarten students.

Text Talk.

To understand the strategy, Text Talk, one should revisit the definition of an interactive read-aloud. Barclay (2009) reminded readers that a read-aloud must contain certain key components in order to be interactive. These included the following: (1) a systematic approach where teachers model higher-level thinking, (2) the use of thoughtful questions which involves analytic talk, (3) the encouragement of children to retell parts of a story in their own language, and (4) reading books which are related by topic or encourage a selection of key vocabulary words. Beck and McKeown (2001) developed Text Talk. These authors recommended using challenging texts, interactively, to improve students' language and comprehension abilities by using a systematic approach during read-aloud lessons. They created this strategy focusing on the enhancement of young children and their abilities to construct meaning from language.

Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, and Kucan (1997) originally created Questioning the Author, an approach for text-based instruction that includes the premise that students would be involved in the process of breaking apart print. Due to the mature understanding of this process, Questioning the Author was geared toward intermediate students, who must read their own texts in order to engage in the strategy. After observing success with older children, Beck and McKeown (2001) created Text Talk to serve the younger students focusing on kindergarteners and first graders. This strategy included teaching the use of illustrations included in picturebooks as a tool for understanding text. As stated by these authors,

> Text Talk attends to children's language development in two ways. One is that the kinds of questions asked elicit greater language production. The other is that Text

> Talk takes advantage of some of the sophisticated vocabulary round in young children's trade books by explicitly teaching and encouraging use of several words from a story (p. 13).

The term trade book is synonymous with picturebook, meaning that it is a published children's book found in libraries, book fairs, or retail stores. Some reading series have authors write small books for the purpose of practice that are unavailable to families for purchase or rent. One advantage for the use of Text Talk is that the strategy featuring books that teachers can access easily and is not limited to nationally published reading series.

Beck and McKeown (2001) also included a structure that applies to the reading of a book selected by a given teacher. Thus, this strategy can allow an interventionist to select the book and the words to feature. Stahl (2004) suggested that basal readers have limitations surrounding main idea activities and recommended that teachers must design their own opportunities for understanding text and the vocabulary within. This can be a dangerous assumption, as many teachers may not have the strategies needed to accomplish this task nor the knowledge that separate, additional instruction must occur. Text Talk encourages a component that seems essential to the experts of younger children.

In general, Text Talk is a strategy that uses a read-aloud experience to the maximum potential so that students can gain skills in comprehension and vocabulary. To accomplish this feat, Beck and McKeown (2001) suggested the following list of components for read-alouds: (1) distinguishing constructing meaning from simply retrieving information in text, (2) recognize the difficulty that children face in acquiring

meaning from decontextualized language, (3) creating meaningful questions, (4) encouraging students to use their background knowledge to make sense of new concepts (culturally-response teaching), (5) using illustrations in children's books to help children bridge the gap from linguistic tasks to comprehension of text and (6) taking advantage of "sophisticated" words found in trade books. Using this strategy, coupled with well-selected books, creates an opportunity to enhance the vocabulary of kindergarten students. Text Talk is a developmentally appropriate, systematic strategy that allows interaction between a teacher and her students. Additionally, Conrad, Gong, Sipp, and Wright (2004) described Text Talk as a "gateway to culturally responsive teaching" (p. 187) and suggested that it a good choice for any kindergarten teacher. Literature suggested that results are significantly positive when this strategy is employed (Stahl, 2004; Conrad et al., 2004). Assuming that this strategy is optimum, choosing the literature teachers use as springboards to vocabulary instruction is essential.

Selection of Books

For any study using read-aloud as a springboard to teach new vocabulary, the backbone of the strategy is the books selected. Without high quality literature, the effects of the treatment decline. Albright (2002) used the following criteria for book selection: (1) quality of literature, (2) relevance to topics of interest, and (3) curiosity of students. Albright relied on the work of Moss (1995) who also suggested that books must be interesting to students. In one study, the teacher selected the books based on student interest but no specific procedure for the selection process was stated (Fisher, Flood, Lap, & Frey, 2004). These authors also observed teachers choosing award-winning books such as Newbery or Caldecott winners.

Gambrell and Jawitz (1993) focused on the illustrations in order to select their books. These authors wanted to test mental imagery after students heard stories. They used the following three criteria for determining characteristics of text-relevant illustrations: (a) the illustrations contained information related to text, (b) the pictures aligned with the content of the story, and (c) the illustrations were representative spatially of the content. Concerning the focus on illustrations, Beck and McKeown (2001) described observations of kindergarteners who ignore the text and relied on pictures to answer questions. This process seems alarming when the task is word acquisition.

Ranker (2007) actually selected comic books to use as read-alouds for first graders. The thought behind this selection process was to reduce the number of words used by an author to communicate thoughts to an audience. As these students were learning English as a second language, the use of comic books seemed practical. The motivation behind this type of selection process differed from the focus of increasing the receptive vocabulary.

Durand, Howell, Schumacher, and Sutton (2007), "browsed our classroom libraries and gathered literature we felt pertained to each of the themes" (p. 23). These authors were trying to locate books that referenced the concept of care. Although they had a mission in mind, the selection process was subjective. They did not report being concerned with the readability levels. Hickman, Pollard-Durodola, and Vaughn (2004) also selected books by theme, suggesting that using books surrounding a given topic would help students concentrate on learning target words because they relate. In this way, words repeat from book to book, strengthening the students' chance of acquisition. This concept may be related to studies that focused on the use of informational picturebooks

(Leung, 2008; Bradham, Boyd, & Edgington, 2000; Yopp & Yopp, 2000) because thematic science and social studies vocabulary is included.

Several studies mentioned the readability of books. Penno, Wilkinson, and Moore (2002) asked the teacher to select unfamiliar books that were above the readability level of her students. The information given did not mention if students were all reading on the same level nor did the selection process include this possible variance. Along with Penno et al., Robbins and Ehri (1994) also wanted to ensure that children had not previously heard the possible selections by actually interviewing the children to see if the stories were familiar to the sample. Some researchers actually edited the text to reduce the readability of a chosen picturebook (Robbins & Ehri, 1994).

Even Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) were vague on their selection process. This was surprising as these authors have been thorough and specific when describing their treatment given to words during read-aloud times. Although their national effort to initiate Text Talk received significant attention, they chose the books for read-alouds and simply referenced them as selected trade books. These authors focused on the sophisticated words found in trade books, but ignored the selection of such books. The Association of American University Presses (AAUP) defined trade books as "books intended for the general public, and marketed with trade discount through bookstores and to libraries, as distinct from textbooks, subscription books, etc." (http://aaupnet.org). This definition encompasses thousands of books that owned by many teachers. Unless otherwise stated, all of the literature surrounding the use of read-alouds to enhance the acquisition of vocabulary refers to the use of trade books. Specifically, the trade books that fall under the category of picturebooks, previously defined.

"Teachers have received little guidance on the many factors that should be considered when selecting books…" (Donovan & Smolkin, 2002, p. 502). Considering the many, varied ways that researchers have chosen to select books, one may understand the difficulty of these choices and the confusion surrounding what is best. To understand the choice process, the words selected as targets during a read-aloud warrant investigation. In other words, finding the books that contain the words students need to acquire must become a focus. This may explain why word choice reciprocates book choice and neither process can be independent of the other. Selecting books depends on the kind of words children need to acquire.

Selection of Target Words

As the treatment for this study focuses on the selection of target words within picturebooks, reviewing literature to examine how other researchers have approached this element is relevant. Biemiller (2005) explained that learning to *read* text is not the same as learning to *understand* text. He suggested that North American teachers have made progress in teaching children to read but ignore the influence of teaching the art of understanding text. Thus, the impact of vocabulary on literacy becomes critical in the eyes of researchers. Researchers suggested that there is remarkable evidence supporting a lack of vocabulary instruction delivered to students in the primary grades. This adds *nothing* to a child's vocabulary (Cantalini, 1987; Christian, Morrison, Frzier, & Massetti, 2000). Consequently, this leaves the building of word meaning to family and friends. As reminded by Hart and Risley (1995), children from advantaged families learn more vocabulary at home than those from underprivileged families. Selecting words and initiating treatments to teach their meanings is crucial to the educational family.

Because there are more word meanings than words, the process involved with selecting a set of target words within a picturebook can become complex and arduous (Biemiller, 2005). By nature of age groupings, word selection strategies vary in primary and intermediate grades. The literature referenced in this discussion focuses on kindergarten through second grade, the years when most children are learning to read and participate in read-alouds with their teachers. Applied to many studies, there are three main approaches for word selection referenced in the literature: (1) Beck, McKeown, & Kucan (2002) discussed *tiers* of words, (2) Biemiller (2003) offered teaching word meanings of general value, and (3) Dale and O'Rourke (1981) introduced the Living Word Vocabulary.

Beck, McKeown, & Kucan (2002) introduced the concept of classifying all words into three tiers. These authors describe "Tier 1" words as those learned without educational intervention. These are usually common nouns such as *fork, car,* or *bear.* Additionally, they discuss "Tier 3" words introduced in content area courses or lessons, usually technical terms. Examples of Tier 3 words are *Declaration of Independence* or *condensation*. The last category comprises "Tier 2" words, all of the words taught, discussed, and applied by mature users. These words represent concepts that would deter a child from comprehending text because the meanings make a change in context. Examples include *cautiously* or *trudged.* Although Beck et al. recommended that teaching these types of words is effective during read-aloud times, they have yet to publish a distinct list of such words. This puts the selection of words on teachers who may lack proper training or time to do so.

Biemiller (2005) agreed with the classification system assigned to words and their meanings by Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002). However, he believed there are 1,600 specific words essential for primary children. He described selected words known by 40-80% of students by the end of second grade but are not known by children who enter school with small vocabularies. As other research suggested, this would include many students living in rural areas of poverty (Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, and Watts-Taffe, 2006). Biemiller's book, Words Worth Teaching, Closing the Vocabulary Gap, was published after this dissertation study was well underway so the list provided will be investigated in future research projects. Biemiller and Beck et al. agree on the types of words featured in read-alouds but vary in the exactness of the lists. There was an absence of literature showing any evidence that picturebook authors considered certain words when creating texts.

Dale and O'Rourke (1981) evaluated the knowledge of 30,000 root words. They examined the derived meanings of students in grades four through twelve. Since 1981, researchers respect this knowledge. However, the vast amount of words featured in their *Living Word Vocabulary* seems too immense to use for the selection of a few target words taught within read-alouds. Aligning the text of picturebooks with the list of words is a daunting task. Their work targeted the needs of students past the primary grades and involved numerous word choices. Nonetheless, their suggestions aligned with recent work done by Biemiller (2005) and Beck, McKeown, & Kucan (2002).

The literature surrounding word selection strategies focused the discussion in the prior review. Most studies mentioned the importance of considering which words to teach but lacked details in exact methods (Penno, Wilkinso, & Moore, 2002; Santoro et al.,

2008). The task of finding a method for selecting target words is difficult. Fewer attempts from classroom teachers to teach vocabulary during read-alouds may suggest that educators are overwhelmed in choosing words. This sounds like a simple problem to scholars but informs researchers that more work follows to convey research to practice.

Vocabulary Assessment Instruments

Dunn and Dunn launched the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) in 1959 with the fourth edition (2006) as the most current. The design of the PPVT measures receptive vocabulary for Standard American English for the ages of 2:6 (two years, six months old) to 90+ years old (www.pearsonassessments.com). An administrator evaluates receptive vocabulary with a test that requires no reading or writing from the participant. For each word tested, students select one of four pictures that best represents the word meaning.

The PPVT appeared to dominate the choice made by researchers in studies surrounding the acquisition of vocabulary. Many researchers have used the PPVT to determine levels of vocabulary acquisition from read-aloud lessons (Leung, 2008; Walsh & Blewitt, 2006: Senchal, Thomas, & Monker, 1995; Justice, Meier, & Walpole, 2005). However, the way the PPVT is used differs. For example, Walsh and Blewitt administered the test to participants in an effort to form three equal groups prior to their study. Justice et al. (2005) used the PPVT as a pretest and posttest measurement. It appears that researchers benefit by using this assessment to gather data when the intent of the study includes a treatment issued over six months. This seems logical as the vocabulary of young children can increase significantly from one year to the next.

When studies concentrated on specific target words, researchers often created an instrument that mirrors the format of the PPVT (Silverman, 2007; Leung, 2008; Coyne, McCoach, & Kapp, 2007). In essence, the instrument requires participants to identify the picture from four choices that best describes a given word. Instead of measuring an overall receptive vocabulary level, the researcher-created assessments measured the progress on a specific set of words to determine if treatments were successful. This decision blended the successful format of the PPVT with a researcher's need to determine if progress on a few words is significant.

Walsh and Blewitt (2006) used the PPVT to form three similar groups. Even though they used the PPVT to make these determinations, they used their own assessment to determine if treatments revealed significance. These authors suggested that regardless of the scores on the PPVT prior to their experiment, all children receiving treatments made progress on the assessment instrument they created. In other words, they needed an instrument that measured participants' progress on an exact list of words. For this type of study, where students learn specific target words during a read-aloud, determining the success of participants to acquire those words is essential. Without this information, researchers would not be able to determine if strategies employed are significant.

Silverman (2007) used the Test of Language Development P:3 (TOLD) as a template to create her own picture assessment for vocabulary words targeted during her study. Hammer, Pennock-Roman, Rzasa, and Tomblin (2002) reported that this instrument has significant differential item functioning (DIF). Shepard (1981) reported bias as a systematic error that puts the performance of one culture or group at a disadvantage. When one group performs much better than another group on test items,

DIF occurs. In other words, such items function differentially for two or more groups (Jensen, 1980). Hammer et al. found that 16% of the items on the TOLD were harder for some cultures. For example, these authors suggested that of these items, 75% of them were more difficult for the African American group. When a test does not seem fair to subgroups, a researcher planning a study in Appalachia must be wary. Since the instrument was not a good choice in the rural Midwest, the TOLD did not seem to be a good choice for a rural population in Kentucky due to the DIF results.

Other relevant research related to the PPVT included the work of Ewers and Brownson (1999). These authors discussed prior projects suggesting that scores on the PPVT can predict the potential for a child in learning new vocabulary words. Robbins and Ehri (1994) resonated this as they found a substantial correlation between kindergarteners' PPVT scores and vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, Senechal, Thomas, and Monker (1995) found that 4-year-olds who had higher scores on the PPVT acquired more target words than those whose scores were low. All of these authors referenced the PPVT as an assessment useful for assessing vocabulary of participants. None of these projects actually used the assessment as a pretest and posttest instrument. They created assessment tools that evaluated progress on a specific list of words. Once again, depending on the design of the study, the PPVT offers valuable data after a strategy is in effect for a long period but does not offer significant data for a short term.

Regardless of the choice of instruments, the literature consistently suggested that using a vocabulary assessment tool would offer educators pertinent information to improve vocabulary of youngsters. When contemplating how research can lead to practice, one must consider that all of the instruments require individual administration

for determining vocabulary levels of children. This procedure lacks practicality, as teachers may not have time and resources to administer a 30-minute instrument to each student. Time constraints may offer researchers food for though and may explain why suggestions stemming from research do not reach the field. In the review, there was a lack of research on ways to gather data to inform teachers quickly and efficiently. In most schools, the PPVT offers educators information on special needs' students; interestingly, the results offered to teacher on all children would be beneficial.

The amount of time needed to administer tests may also explain the low numbers of participants selected as samples in many projects. However, even with studies based on data taken from sample sizes of 35-60 students (Ewers & Brownson, 1999; Silverman, 2007; Coyne, McCoach, & Kapp, 2007; Sipe, 2000), these types of individual assessments offer significant findings. The PPVT, or researcher-created tests following this format, informed researchers about the effect of different strategies on the acquisition of vocabulary words.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Rural Appalachia

After several years of intense work on the definition of culturally responsive pedagogy, Ladson-Billings (1995), offered a revised definition:

> Culturally responsive teaching is pedagogy of opposition similar to critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective empowerment. Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order (p. 160).

The first two criteria seemed relevant for this study. However, due to the age of kindergarten students, the third proposition seemed unreasonable to expect. Educators may recognize that students of this young age could begin to understand this process but the maturity needed for challenging the status quo of the current social order is too advanced. In order for these propositions to reveal success, a teacher must lead the way. Balancing cultural integrity with academic excellence can be challenging but should be an essential goal for teachers responsible for culturally diverse groups. Ironically, that would include all teachers.

When discussing the place in education for achieving a culturally responsive pedagogy for rural Appalachian students, educators often ignore this need. It appeared that many of those involved with schooling do not understand diversity existing in small, rural schools because most of the students *look* the same. Hillis and Ralston (2001) made a valid observation as they wrote,

> Because of their ethnic/racial homogeneity, Appalachian schools often see multicultural education as irrelevant. Teacher education must link the oppression of Appalachia with that of more visible minority groups; show how knowledge is subjective; and emphasize that true national unity results from honoring diversity. Teachers will then realize that multicultural education is viable and relevant for rural communities (p. 7).

To echo this thought, Gay (2002), states, "Teachers knowledge about and attitudes toward cultural diversity are powerful determinants of learning opportunities and outcomes for ethnically different students. For some students they facilitate academic achievement; for others they obstruct learning" (p. 613). Culturally responsive curriculum

and instruction is imperative. Researchers are working diligently to make progress as the world, particularly the United States, becomes more diverse. Those involved with schooling face the dilemma surrounding the education of many cultures. Concerning teaching in rural Appalachia, students in this area of the world need culturally responsive pedagogy and the lack of literature specific to this population or culture is evident. As stated by Dilger (1994),

> Various analogies illustrate this dilemma. In the 'salad bowl' analogy, each ethnic group plays a unique role, contributes to, and enriches the total society. In the 'melting pot' analogy, all ethnic groups merge together to make a 'vegetable stew', combining all ingredients into a new form and content that loses the identity of the original 'vegetables.' Unfortunately, instead of combining to form a new people in a new land, most of the immigrant and ethnic groups that have come to America 'stick to the bottom' of the proverbial melting pot" (p. 50).

These analogies are relevant and understandable. However, where do people with ancestral roots in the Appalachian area of Kentucky fit in this scenario? Are they a different vegetable in the salad or the pot? Misunderstanding that this group of Americans do comprise a separate group who deserve culturally responsive pedagogy may be reasons for poor test scores, low levels of literacy, and low educational goals. Even though many families, mostly Caucasians who speak English, resided in this area since the foundation of America, this population still represents a separate culture. “Culturally, Appalachian people have been portrayed throughout the twentieth century as a static, homogenous, white mountain culture” (Morgan & Reel, 2003, p.29). Educators

are key stakeholders in the success of all cultures and schools are the places where life and learning converge.

Since this study focused on the Appalachian young people, reflection on the existing literature seemed important. Upon reviewing the work of others, none specifically mentioned the Appalachian culture or revealed studies focused on that particular culture when focusing on the acquisition of vocabulary via culturally relevant books. Gay (2002) recommended that educators focus on three elements of culturally responsive pedagogy, "critical cultural consciousness of teachers...; diverse communities of learners; and multicultural curriculum and instruction" (p. 613). Her work focused on African-American students from low-income families. The cultures of the students in her work are not the same as the children from rural areas in Kentucky's Appalachian area. However, Gay offered advice that could parallel both groups because of their low-income families and existence in poverty. Her work surrounds the principal of understanding the group and celebrating their differences by meeting their needs, culturally.

Critical cultural consciousness of teachers.

Townsend (2002) suggested that "deliberate actions are needed to move pre- and inservice teachers toward the effective use of culturally responsive pedagogy to ensure that we 'leave no teacher behind'" (p. 737). In order to raise the consciousness level of teachers, literature suggested that training should consist of specific programming that facilitates teachers to meet the needs of specific cultures. For example, Townsend recommended that colleges introduce a certification in culturally responsive pedagogy. Richards, Brown, and Forde (2007) suggested that two dimensions are particularly relevant to the critical culturally consciousness of teachers--the personal and the

instructional. "The personal dimension refers to the cognitive and emotional processes teachers must engage in to become culturally responsive. The instructional dimension includes materials, strategies, and activities that form the basis of instruction" (p. 64). It is the responsibility of the teacher to introduce materials, such as specific read-aloud books, which welcome and support the group of students sitting in front of her waiting to learn. Ladson-Billings (1994) reminded readers that a way to involve students and reduce alienation is to use culturally responsive pedagogy. She spoke of the difficulty for some students to enter *the world of school*. Thus, teachers must be conscious of the cultures included in the classroom community.

The inquisitive nature of culturally responsive teachers is essential. Educators must ask many questions, contemplate the ethnic diversity within the classroom walls and make decisions accordingly. Teachers must understand that the diversity of a given group of children is not limited to the color of their skin; this includes differences in family structure, opportunities, and socio-economic status. Ladson-Billings (1995) stated, "This can be accomplished partly by helping prospective teachers understand culture (their own and others) and the way it functions in education" (p. 483). The implications of this literature surrounded the need for more research in the field of teacher preparation in an effort to encourage the practice of exemplary teachers. The researcher designed this study to test a strategy that provides teachers with a concrete, hands-on method for encouraging the vocabulary of youngsters while maintaining a cultural focus.

Similar parallels exist between the rural Appalachian students and a low-income Mexican American community in a large United States city. Gutstein, Lipman, Hernandez, and de los Reyes (1997) created a project to help teachers use knowledge

about their students' culture to improve the learning of mathematics. Even though the ethnicity of the two groups varied greatly and the rural vs. urban dilemma existed, the understanding of the teachers to deal with low-income families, the lack of family support, and the need to motivate both groups using a cultural lens seemed similar. Gutstein et al. (1997) suggested that the teachers and principal had trouble articulating what they do to bring success because they are so immersed in the culture themselves. These authors made the plea for collaboration of all stakeholders to increase the success of the students.

When reviewing literature, one may encounter different definitions, varied cultures, or wide-ranging vocabulary referencing the concepts surrounding culturally responsive pedagogy. Davenport (2000) suggested that there are many correct theories but that the need exists to *polish the lenses* of teachers and refocus, as more cultural diversity exists than ever before in history. In summation, literature seemed to support the theory that preparing teachers to be critically conscious of cultures, their own and their students, is a crucial step to build critically responsive pedagogy. Awareness and collaboration of stakeholders seemed to be essential. Although some literature is culture specific, it generally implied that the needs of one population parallel the needs of another. The rural Appalachian population needs more attention in the area of educational research. As this group is unique and oppressed, researchers need to focus on culturally responsive practices for teachers who strive to increase levels of literacy leading to academic success.

Diverse communities of learners.

Awareness of the reality that the community of learners in schools across the United States is truly diverse, can lead to a better understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy. The ethnic groups have subgroups. Caucasian students are not limited to a group for research labeled "white". Within that category, there is vast diversity. The literature surrounding diverse communities of learners implied that educators and policy makers must become more aware of the many, varied groups and subgroups. Dilger (1994) suggested that schools need to focus more attention to the differences *within* ethnic groups. The generic labels assigned to students by racial and ethnicities are not enough to make strong educational decisions. He stated, "For distinctly different cultural and linguistic groups, education has tended to cut students off from their traditional cultures while failing to provide access to mainstream culture" (p. 52). The reasons why this statement seemed valid, when applied to a rural Appalachian child, are complex. Not only have these students and their families lost recognition of their culture in the eyes of the world resulting in oppression, they appeared to have been lumped into broader categories by legislators that judge by skin tone and income.

Dreeben and Gamoran (1986) conducted a study to show how children respond in similar ways to similar instruction independently on their social characteristics. They categorized their participants as white and black students, with no attention to subgroupings. These authors suggested that the original racial differences in learning reflect the general conditions of the school system. Thus, the school system had a plan that did not consider the needs within racial groups, only the acknowledgement that there were two groups. There was evidence that the students learned reading vocabulary words

differently according to several blended factors including race, reading aptitude, and the faculty working with them. What stems from this work was a reminder that exemplary teaching is much more than recognizing race.

Another example of the importance of understanding the diverse community of learners was a study surrounding a six-year-old curriculum development project in southwest Alaska. Researchers at the University of Alaska, area schools, and Yup'ik Eskimo communities, worked together. They focused efforts directly on the community of learners. They made advancements included building culturally responsive curriculum and instruction for a diverse community. Lipka (1989) wrote, "This article suggests an alternative model of schooling that conceives the school as a community institution, accepts conflict between school and the larger dominant society, and acknowledges communities' efforts in devising their own political institutions" (p. 216). By focusing on the community of learners, this study suggested that other communities, saturated by cultures other than Native communities, might be able to bridge the gap for students and reduce cultural tensions. In order to accomplish this, schools need to become agencies within the community, not in isolation. In other words, successful schools cannot follow the recipe of state departments without remembering that standards need cultural responsive tweaking.

As related to Native American children, specifically Navajo students, "the educational literature continues to characterize [them] as nonanalytical, nonverbal learners" (McCarty, Lynch, Wallace, & Benally, 1991, p. 42). In the southwestern area of the United States, researchers introduced a Navajo bilingual-bicultural curriculum

targeting one subgroup of a larger diverse population. This was an effort to celebrate the visual learning styles of this population and encourage "nonverbal" curriculum.

The Rough Rock data also suggested that conventional representations of holistic/analytical and verbal/nonverbal learning styles mask the tremendously complex social-behavioral processes underlying students' out of school learning experiences. They facade students' and teachers' historical school experiences, influencing the receptivity to particular pedagogies (McCarty et al., 1991). They reminded readers that considering the community of learners is essential in creating culturally responsive pedagogy. This literature implied that reassessment needs attention on a local, community level to meet the needs of the learners residing there and increase the consciousness of the specific groups and subgroups. The work of McCarty et al. focused on the Navajo population in an area far from Eastern Kentucky; however, suggestions stemming from this research seemed familiar and applicable to rural Appalachia. No matter where or who, the collaboration with the community to create appropriate educational practices for the children is necessary.

In an effort to define diversity, Au and Raphael (2000) described students of diverse backgrounds as those who differ from the mainstream. These authors gave further explanation of this concept by defining students considered different from mainstream Americans into three categories: (1) African-Americans, Asian Americans, Latino/a, or Native Americans with regards to ethnicity, (2) those who speak home languages other than standard American English, and (3) those from low-income families. This broad definition included thousands of students and may suggest that more learners in American schools are diverse than would be considered mainstream. Relying on census

data to determine policies and instructional practices could be a detrimental decision because numbers do not transfer to culturally responsive practices in many cases. Once again, rural Appalachian youth could be categorized as diverse because of their exposure to non-standard American English, dialectically, and low-income families.

Interestingly, one may consider the population of minority students found in correctional facilities and contemplate the relationship of delinquency to poor educational experiences. Harris, Baltodano, Artiles, and Rutherford (2006) stated, "We resonate with Collier and Thomas (2001) who advocate for instructional practices in youth correctional facilities that help culturally and linguistically diverse learners, for these practices could be beneficial for all learners behind the fence" (p. 767). Readers may have realized that cultural groupings are not limited to groups attending American public schools but may encompass other places of learning. Whatever the case or the severity, educational practices must consider those who care for the youngsters that recognize the needs of the learners.

Multicultural curriculum and instruction.

Literature surrounding the concept of multicultural curriculum and instruction is vast. Several pieces of work suggest that those involved with schooling are learning more about what *not to do* in multiethnic settings than what *to do.* The literature showed evidence of slow advancement in creating culturally responsive pedagogy. Osborne (1996) discussed the effects of culturally relevant pedagogy for those who have been marginalized and normalized in prior settings as he states,

> These studies show unambiguously that, if children are allowed to use the communication patterns that they have acquired at home and/or in their local

> communities, they are likely to actively participate more in class and, hence, learn more. Teachers' ability to use these home/community participation structures depends on their knowledge of the local community (p. 303).

This continuous process requires dialogue and planning on all levels of schooling. It also must include the introduction of actual classroom teaching techniques, not only theories.

Phuntsog (2001) conducted a study where the responses of 33 teachers were analyzed to identify their perceptions of the importance of culturally responsive teaching in elementary schools in the United States. Over 96% of the respondents considered culturally responsive teaching to be an integral part of encouraging student success. Enhancing education may involve the critical role of teachers to develop learning activities or make curriculum and instructional decisions that consider the culture of all children. Although these teachers recognized the importance, whether they have the tools in their toolbox is unclear.

The debates surrounding culturally responsive curriculums went deeper. Concerning literacy, there was confusion and turmoil. Ladson-Billings (1992), who did extensive work with the African-American student population, made the following statement:

> Literacy is a tool of liberation, both personal and cultural....Pedagogy is embedded in the premise of this article--not simply *what* and *how* successful teachers of African-American students achieve success but also *why* they do it. It has been less about what is *on* the lines and pages than what is *between* the lines and beyond the pages (p. 318).

Literature related to the use of Afrocentric curriculum with those of African descent was easily accessible. Researchers targeted this cultural group often, keeping in mind that the large population has smaller subgroups, each with unique educational needs. Sefa Dei (1996) added, "In effect, Afrocentric education (curriculum and pedagogy) proceeds from an understanding that each individual stakeholder has something to offer and that diverse viewpoints, experiences, and perspectives strengthen the collective bonds of the school" (p. 182). Regardless of what ethnic or cultural group, all stakeholders must communicate. Prior to this, all of those involved must recognize that there is a cultural difference needing to be the focus of dialogue. In many places, it appeared that the native people do not even know that culturally responsive decisions need to be discussed; this was something taken for granted or ignored.

In an effort to develop a multicultural curriculum responsive to the Native American population, Butterfield (1983) described the Pacific Northwest Indian Reading and Language Development Program (IRLDP), an example of a program designed to increase student outcomes of this particular program. When children received instruction from a culturally responsive approach, the results suggested an increase of reading and responding. She made an interesting statement when discussing the relationship between the work done with the Native American population as related to other Americans, "It is ironic that so much as been written, said, and portrayed relative to those heritages brought here by immigrants and so little information shared concerning those indigenous to this land, the American Indians" (p. 65). Those from all cultures share this frustration and this may explain the difficulty that policy makers may have for such causes. Of course, policy makers would need to know that cultural matters could affect the nation.

As the literature addressed the needs of culturally responsive curriculum and instruction, assessment needed attention. These two categories are inseparable and open new concerns for how students receive access in a culturally fair way. Smith-Maddox (1998) suggested focusing on the importance on the development of culturally responsive assessment instruments encourages a stronger analysis of multicultural education in general. To echo this concern, Lee (1998) wrote, "One of the major challenges facing the movement toward authentic instruction and assessment is the lack of external validity that has been obtained as far as minority student populations and the children of the poor are concerned" (p. 268). Not only is curriculum and instruction vital, but assessment tools are crucial as well, leaving those involved with more complex dilemmas. Is it possible to issue national assessments for such a diverse country? Is it fair? Does it offer educators and policy makers reliable and valid data needed to inform those involved with schooling? A question on an assessment regarding the food chain of animals in the desert does not seem culturally responsive to those living in the Appalachian Mountains. Although the students from both places need to understand food chains, the question itself is non-responsive, culturally.

Literature related to culturally responsive pedagogy can also include those who advocate for education regarding a sense of place. Some theorists believed that place is a major factor involved with culture (Gruenewald, 2003; Theobald, 1997; Orr, 1994). As stated by Gruenewald, "Education aims to reframe the discourse of democracy and accountability so that the character and quality of places, and our relationship to them, figure significantly in the purpose, process, and assessment of education" (p. 645).

Regardless of what place, people residing there deserve for researchers and educators to consider the location and their needs.

The literature was available to make a case for culturally responsive pedagogy. However, one obstacle to this well-supported idea was that teachers and principals in the United States have an obligation to meet the needs of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Powell, Higgins, Aram, and Freed (2009) reported the two most important foci of rural principals are meeting the AYP and raising test scores. With high demands on curriculum and instruction, often following national reading series, teachers have less time or permission to vary from the scripted manuals to do something like read stories that are culturally relevant to the rural students sitting in front of them. This brought a dilemma to researchers and educational administrators. What if school leaders fear that test scores will fall? Will the scores fall? Literature created like that of Powell et al. seemed to strengthen the need for strategies, recognized by national curriculums, to be introduced giving teachers the window of opportunity to do what is best for their own students. The pressure to follow national protocol may need examination by all involved. Educators in all sectors probably share this problem. As stated by Powell et al., "NCLB is violating teachers' professional norms and values while fostering an increasingly anti-intellectual climate in our nation's schools" (p. 27). These authors suggested that rural schools would have even more difficulty finding highly qualified teachers who have the freedom to read books about place aloud to their students and teach the words needed to understand such treasures.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

There was an absence of literature focusing on strategies to encourage the acquisition of vocabulary words among rural kindergarteners, particularly those from rural Appalachian areas of Kentucky. The researcher, a veteran kindergarten teacher, designed a study that would offer insight into the effects of teaching vocabulary words during read-alouds to this population. This chapter includes a description of the study and addresses the choice to use a quantitative methodology. The following discussion explained the decisions regarding the selected population and sample, research site, materials, instrumentation and data collection, and data analysis. In addition to determining the sample and data collection techniques, the investigator had to consider several key elements to insure the validity, reliability, and relevance of the research. These unique elements included: (1) book selection, (2) target word selection, (3) the creation of effective lessons featuring Text Talk, and (4) the decision surrounding the interventionist and delivery of the treatment. In an effort to contribute to the literature, the researcher combined these elements in an innovative way. This chapter includes a discussion of the procedures used to complete this study. Finally, there is a summary of the elements surrounding this study.

Population and Sample

The population in this study included kindergarteners from rural settings in the Appalachian area of Kentucky. The decision to target this group surrounds both a lack of prior research and the interest of those at Eastern Kentucky University who serve this population of learners by preparing teachers to improve educational strategies in this

region. The EKU Service Region includes 22 counties, all of which are located in the Central Appalachian Region of the United States. According to the Appalachian Regional Commission, this area has the lowest percentage of high school graduates from Appalachian areas of the country when compared to the national average for high school completion with only 77.7% in 2000. The design of this study focused on this group of people in an effort to determine strategies to improve literacy.

Site selection. A letter of interest (Appendix A) was sent to five elementary school principals whose school met the following criteria: (1) Located in an Appalachian county in EKU Service Region, (2) Free and Reduced Lunch Rate of 50% or higher, and (3) All-day Kindergarten program with two classrooms. Each of the five schools was located in a different county thus a different school system and are less than one hour driving distance from the main EKU campus in Richmond, Kentucky. As only one of the principals returned a positive response, his school became the selected research site.

Sample. The selected school had two all-day kindergarten classrooms with an enrollment of 27 students in one classroom and 28 students in the other. The researcher sent a letter (Appendix B) seeking parental permission to all 54 families with 41 students returning slips granting permission. Class A had 21 students with permission and Class B had 20 students. Thus, the sample consisted of 41 participants.

Materials for the Study

The study required the reading of six picturebooks to two groups of students and involved the implementation of Text Talk. The researcher selected the six books, determined six target words per book totaling 36 vocabulary words, created individual

lesson plans for Group A and Group B regarding the six read-alouds, and located other materials necessary to complete the lessons. The discussion of each area follows.

Picturebooks. The researcher selected six picturebooks for the read-aloud selections. Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson (2008) defined *picturebooks* as

> profusely illustrated books in which both words and illustrations contribute to the story's meaning. In a true picturebook, the story would be diminished, and in some cases confusing, without the illustrations, and so we say that illustrations in picture books are integral, or essential, to the story. Picturebooks are written in all genres; they have illustrations on every page or every other page; and generally, they are thirty-two pages long (p.91).

Criteria provided by Hargrave & Senechal (2000) guided the selection. Their criteria included books with the following features: (a) colorful illustrations which provide the opportunity for narrating the story without complete reliance on the text, (b) potentially new vocabulary apparent in the illustrations and the text, (c) texts which are not excessively long to increase the likelihood of read-child interactions, (d) appropriate features for the entire age range of children participating in the study, (e) no specific reference to certain holidays, and (f) no rhyme or features of word books (books that are simply labeled illustrations without a storyline). Books selected for this study contained a readability level lower than third grade, according to Fry's Readability Graph. The reason for this specification is that kindergarten children should be able to listen and comprehend a book considered to have a reading level up to two years higher than the median grade level of the children themselves. In addition, vocabulary words found in

texts with higher grade levels can be considered as they can become part of a child's receptive language, not necessarily expressive language.

Additionally, the theme of the books used for this study includes environmental education. The illustrations and text choices contained culturally relevant material paralleling the environment of the Rural Appalachia area of Kentucky to the illustrations and text. For example, animal characters were animals found in this part of the United States versus characters whose natural home was in a different region of the country or the world.

To assist in the selection process and increase the reliability for the work, graduate students evaluated 18 picturebooks to determine if the researcher-created form, entitled Book Selection Form was reliable (Appendix C). Upon their approval, this form became the evaluation instrument for all of the books considered for the study. As an addition to the form, the researcher included the Fry's Readability Graph to determine an estimated readability level for each book.

Additionally, the researcher shared books, which met all of the criteria included on the Book Selection Form, to groups of kindergarteners. Students gave their opinions on a kid-friendly form, entitled the Kid Pick Form (Appendix D). Researcher asked, "How did you like this book?" On the form, there is a happy face, a "straight" face, and a sad face. The happy face signifies that it is an enjoyable book; the "straight" face signifies that it is an average book; and a sad face signifies that the child does not enjoy hearing that selection. The evaluation included the score using this formula: The number of voters in each group multiplied by three gives the possible number of points per book. The calculation of the actual votes consisted of this scoring rubric: a happy face scores

three points per child, a “straight” face scores two points, and a sad face scores one point. By dividing the number possible by the total number of points, the researcher could determine a percentage.

By design, possible book choices had a percentage score of higher than 85%. From prior efforts by the researcher, this number appeared to determine a fair cut-off score. When testing the form with the researcher’s actual kindergarten class, children rated most books with either higher than 85% or lower than 70%. This suggests that 85% was a natural cut-off score. These efforts included the reading of ten books, five considered favorites of kindergarten children and five considered least favorites, according to a librarian. The favorite choices all scored 87% or higher and the least favorite choices were all less than 80%, again leading the researcher to assume that books higher than 85% were preferred by kindergarteners using this simple, teacher-created system. The investigator thought that the autonomy of children to form an opinion was worth considering prior to selecting the six picturebooks for this study. Interestingly, students in the sample also voted on each selection and their Kid-Pick Scores for all books were higher than 85% as well. Prior literature did not offer evidence supporting the idea to allow children to get involved in the selection process. None of the reviewed studies mentioned the consideration of children.

Books meeting the criteria of the Book Selection Form and having a Kid-Pick Score of higher than 85%, became the pool of book choices for the study. From this group, the researcher eliminated a few choices because of the lack of Tier-Two vocabulary words required in the read-alouds. After filtering all of the books using the

elimination strategies, the researcher chose six books featuring environmental themes that contain at least six possible target words. Table 1 reveals the literature choices.

Table 1. Selected Picturebooks and Target Words.

Title of Book	Author/Illustrator	Target Words
Winnie Finn, Worm Farmer	Carol Brendler/Ard Hoyt	squirmy, coaxed, rickety, plucked, sleek, drooping
The Curious Garden	Peter Brown	dreary, drizzly, pruning, delicate, gear, blossomed
The Perfect Nest	Catherine Friend/John Manders	attract, lumbered, refused, rumbled, scrambled, shivering
Miss Fox's Class Goes Green	Eileen Spinelli/Anne Kennedy	swap, decompose, pollute, going green, piped, cloth
Roosters Off to See the World	Eric Carle	wandered, eager, pleaded, delighted, complained, polite
Tops and Bottoms	Janet Stevens	wealth, business partners, harvest, scowled, profit, stand

Target words. Following the advice of Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002), the researcher selected six words per picturebook to feature when using Text Talk, the read-aloud strategy. The suggestions made by these authors included the use of Tier 2 vocabulary words. In order to comprehend text, instructors teach, discuss, and apply these words to mature users. Tier 1 words are simple nouns and Tier 3 words are technical terms acquired during content lessons. Tier 2 words can change the meaning of text if omitted; thus children hearing a story must understand their meanings or the message from authors is misunderstood. An example is the word *rickety* in this sentence: Winnie Finn had a *rickety* wagon, making her work difficult. If listeners do not understand that rickety means old, they may not comprehend her plight to buy a new wagon. The researcher selected six words per story that appeared essential to the understanding of the text. Table 1 also includes the selected target words for the study. These words are

numbered from 1 to 6 as they appear within the text. Group A received instruction, using Text Talk, on the odd words and Group B received instruction on the even words.

The reader used word cards prior to the readings to allow children an opportunity to hear and see the words. Although the children in the study could not read, it was critical that they saw and said the words so that terms sounded familiar when listening to the picturebook (Beck & McKeown, 2000). Students that have a special reason to listening critically to a story also stay engaged more frequently. Upon completion of the read-alouds, teachers displayed word cards in the classroom for future reference. The teacher in Group A hung the odd words and the teacher in Group B hung the even words. After the read-alouds, the researcher gave the control words to each teacher (Group A received even words and Group B received odd words) so that children could have equal access to vocabulary.

Lesson plans. To assure appropriate use of Text Talk, the researcher created lesson plans for Group A on all six books, three words each and the same for Group B. This includes the creation of 12 lesson plans, six for each group (Appendix E and F, Group A and Group B). Depending on the meaning of a given target word, lessons include props or plans to dramatize each word. Children benefit from stopping the story at strategic times to learn a new word. These mini-lessons strengthen the understanding of the individual words but more importantly, how the words are essential to comprehension of the text (Beck & McKeown, 2000). The reader simple read target words considered control words for each group within the text, known as incidental exposure. Although this step was not included in each lesson plan, it was an essential step in the design of the study.

Interventionist. The decision for the researcher to be the reader encouraged consistency of the delivery for the treatment. Since the researcher is a veteran kindergarten teacher, it seems appropriate that she taught the lessons. In essence, the researcher became the reader during the read-alouds. This also meant that she stopped the story to teach target words using Text Talk. The researcher and her chair made this decision prior to sending letters of interest to any school. As instructors have different teaching styles, the fear that data would reflect too many differences in the delivery of Text Talk led the team to the choice of researcher as interventionist. Even though each group received instruction on three different target words, the delivery of the treatment offered parallel experiences within the two groups. Key elements such as voice intonation, body language, and sharing of illustrations, are examples of the importance of keeping the read-alouds similar for both groups. Although the researcher made efforts to be fair and equitable with both groups, this assumption created a risk for reliability of the study.

Miscellaneous materials. In addition to the books, word cards, lessons plans, and other necessary props, the researcher created a management strategy called, "Mr. Potato Head Learns to Listen". This booklet set a standard so that both groups could understand the researcher's expectations for listening effectively to a story. Knowing that two different teachers had already set standards for the classrooms, preparing children to accept direction from a visiting reader seemed crucial. This also helped the researcher avoid management problems because of a possible prior lack of instruction from the actual classroom teacher(s). The interventionists reviewed "Mr. Potato Head Learns to Listen" prior to each read-aloud in both groups. It appears that Mr. Potato Head's

removable parts align with the use of the five senses; a read-aloud is an experience that can successfully incorporate all five.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

In order to evaluate the treatment, the Target Word Inventory (TWI) was the instrument created to determine if students learn the meaning of target words. The administration of the TWI, patterned after the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), provided the researcher data needed to determine if Text Talk is effective. To create the instrument, the researcher chose four pictures, one of which best depicts the word and three which were related in some way. For example, for the word *rickety*, one wagon was older than the other three new wagons pictured (Appendix G). The researcher consulted a Speech and Language Pathologist at Eastern Kentucky University who administers the PPVT to actual students. The test reflected all of the modifications or suggestions made by the consultant. Since she had given different forms of the PPVT to many students, her advice was invaluable. For example, the test consisted of four choices that are thematically alike with one distinct answer. For the item *rickety*, it was important that all the pictures related in some way, with only one that was "old".

The test was administered to each student prior to treatment and after each read-aloud is completed. The test contained one page for each of the 36 target words. Therefore, before the six read-alouds began, all students took the TWI as directed by the researcher. In essence, the administrator asked all of the participants to respond to all 36 items by asking, "Which picture best describes the word _____?" This session was the pre-test portion of the data collection. The interventionist recorded responses on an answer sheet that includes the word and numbers 1-4 which correspond with the pictures

on the assessment (Appendix H). After each read-aloud, the researcher asked each student to respond to all six words aligned with the book read on a given day. These sessions comprised the post-test portion of the data collection.

All of the students in both kindergarten classes came to the testing table. In order to remain anonymous, the students received a code. Each code began with an F for female or M for male. The number following these initials represented the position on the class list in alphabetical order. The researcher asked for assistance from the teacher or instructional aide to send the students who wore a tag with the research code. Those without parental permission received a coloring sheet corresponding with the book and those with permission responded to the questions. The Internal Review Board advised this idea as an equitable way to avoid exclusion of some students.

The researcher planned the study to occur in less than eight weeks. During the first week, pre-test data is collected. For the next six consecutive weeks, the researcher planned one read-aloud and post-test per week. Those involved with the study decided to provide the last week in case there were changes in schedules. The administrator of the TWI predicted that it would take 10 minutes per child to complete the pre-test, two minutes per child to finish the post-test on each book, and 25 minutes per class to conduct the read-alouds. The researcher followed this schedule without adjustments.

Data Analysis

After data collection, the researcher completed an independent samples t-test to compare Group A and Group B on the pre-test and the post-test. This decision encouraged a better understanding for how the two groups compare prior and after the treatment. In addition, using a repeated measures t-test, the investigator compared the

progress of Group A on odd and even words. This same comparison occurred with Group B. If the two groups of participants began the study statistically different, the researcher hoped that the strategy offered fair and equal access to the acquisition of vocabulary words. In other words, even though one group may know more information in the beginning, hopefully the treatment will insure that all children can learn new words if taught within a read-aloud setting. If the reader applies the treatment, Text Talk, to target vocabulary words, and students do not receive instruction on other target vocabulary words, the researcher hoped that t-tests would reveal a significant increase of scores on the TWI when words received treatment versus control (incidental exposure). Analyzing data using t-tests seemed the best choice to make these determinations after data collection.

Summary

For this study, the researcher applied the strategy, Text Talk, to three words in six picturebooks to two groups of children. Nestled in a rural Appalachian area of Kentucky, the research site included a school containing two kindergarten classes. The researcher completed pre-tests on 41 students prior to the introduction of any picturebooks. Then, the interventionist conducted six read-alouds to both classes. After each read-aloud, children received the post-test on the six target words. The students received a pre-test and post-test on all 36 target words. The researcher analyzed data after the completion of the study.

Chapter 4

Results

In an effort to research possible strategies to improve the literacy levels of children in rural Appalachia, this study targets vocabulary acquisition of kindergarten students. Vocabulary is crucial as it directly relates to the success of reading and comprehension (Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, & Watts-Taffe, 2006). Students from areas of poverty often enter school with low levels of receptive vocabulary making the task of becoming literate challenging (Hart & Risley, 1995). Increasing the number of words children know can significantly improve their understanding of text (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2006). Students continue to increase their vocabulary through all of their years in school; however, children who enter school with low levels of words struggle in reading across the curriculum and often stay behind throughout their years in school. This suggests that kindergarten is the first opportunity for some children to learn new vocabulary. This study targeted students in kindergarten, as this is the crucial beginning of the trek to becoming literate.

This chapter will review the design of the study and reveal the results after data analysis was completed. The study contained a complex design and data collection contains the correct or incorrect responses of 41 students, each exposed to 36 target words. The database includes 1476 entries and the results of the treatment are included in this discussion.

The researcher designed the study to examine the effectiveness of Text Talk (Beck & McKeown, 2000), a strategy intended to teach vocabulary words during a read-aloud to kindergarten students. More specifically, does the use of Text Talk effect the

acquisition of certain target words when applied to those words during a read-aloud in kindergarten? This treatment requires the reader to stop the story and teach a word within the context of the text. Props, dialogue, and drama, assist the children in grasping a better understanding of key vocabulary words. The interventionist embedded Text Talk in six read-alouds to investigate the effectiveness of the strategy on the abilities of kindergarten students in a rural school to attain new words. This includes the introduction of six target words from each of the six picture books used for this study.

The books and target words selected are culturally appropriate for the group of participants as they all featured environmental themes, text, and illustrations aligned with rural Appalachia. In other words, the text and illustrations within the picturebooks depict stories that could happen in the area that the participants reside. For example, Winnie Finn is a character in one of the books who creates an earthworm farm and shares the compost with a man who grows corn. He gives the corn to a woman who raises chickens. Characters and events parallel with the rural Appalachian area and the culture of the people. The thought behind this element included providing children stories in which they have prior knowledge. This makes learning higher level vocabulary words possible.

Context for the Study

After leaving Eastern Kentucky University located in Richmond, Kentucky, in only ten minutes, the terrain begins to change. The Appalachian Mountains are noticeable in the distance, the road begins to get more curvy and narrow, and the signs of rurality become noticeable. Specifically, shacks are intermingled with brick homes, chickens and pigs share yards with people, and there are broken vehicles setting in yards. One notices several house trailers hanging onto the creek bank with many residents in and around

each housing unit. This place appeared to be a place of poverty nestled in a rural Appalachian area.

In the paragraphs to follow, the writer shares anecdotal observations. Although this study is a quantitative research study designed to determine if a strategy used during read-alouds enhances vocabulary, the observations made by the researcher may give a better insight for readers to understand and appreciate the impact of the statistical data. As described, the physiological needs of the participants trumped their academic needs. Sharing some of the demographic information may enhance the understanding of education in rural places of poverty tucked in the Appalachian Mountains and the obstacles those in schooling must hurdle in order to make a difference.

When entering the county where the school is located, one can feel the vehicle struggling to climb the hills. There are several small communities within the county and the site of this project was not the county seat. Visitors can notice a Dairy Dip, several second-hand stores, a small post office, and a gas station/restaurant that seemed to be the "hottest place in town." When visiting the school, the researcher noted that teachers had lunch delivered from the restaurant and the delivery woman rode a motorcycle. On the main road through the town, there were no stoplights. During the day, the school bus drivers parked in all sorts of places. This suggests that the drivers are the community members running the small businesses or helping in these establishments. The least obvious building in town is the elementary school. This school sets on top of a small hill with no sign on the road to let visitors know the way to the school. When asked why the school was so unobvious, the principal suggested that everyone already knew where it was and children were safer if strangers could not find them.

When approaching the school itself, parking is first come, first serve. There was a sign letting visitors know which door to enter, which led to the school office. The building looked clean and there were many displays throughout the hall showing pictures of students, artwork, and some academic pieces of work. Every person greeted visitors and the atmosphere in the building appeared happy to a stranger. Quickly, the two kindergarten teachers let others know why there was a guest in the school. The children immediately accepted someone new and battled for attention which included hugs and love notes and many students asking the researcher, "Do you remember me?" after the first visit.

The school had two crowded kindergarten classrooms. These rooms had a distinct smell of wood smoke, especially around the backpack and coat area, suggesting that many of these students came from homes with wood heat. In the corner of one room was a tub of books and the teacher said that the good books stayed in a cabinet because children would tear them up. There were several differences in the two classrooms. First, one of the teachers had taught longer and seemed to have a better collection of materials. Second, this teacher seemed to create a warmer learning environment as children were able to sit on a large carpet for group time while the other teacher had no rugs on the floor. When asked where she conducted "floor time", she pointed to an unmarked place on the floor. Because of the small space, children struggled to sit in the area together. Fortunately, she was open-minded and suggested that the researcher move some furniture to create a better space for read-alouds. It is common in libraries and elementary classrooms to gather the children in a small floor space so that they can see books more closely and create a snuggly spot for sharing literature. After the research was complete,

the researcher noticed that the teacher secured a rug and arranged the furniture in a new location. These observations indicated that these kindergarten teachers needed professional development based on creating an effective learning environment.

On the Kentucky Department of Education website, the School Report Card for the elementary school indicated a Free and Reduced Lunch rate of 78%. However, when visiting the school, only one child out of 41 students had lunch money. All of the children went through the lunch line without payment, because all kindergarten children received free lunches. The researcher did not know what happened to the boy's lunch money. At the end of the lunch periods, prepackaged items left on students' plates were marked with students' names, as they would serve as snacks later in the day. Yogurt, small boxes of raisins, fruit chews, and cartons of milk were examples of food saved in small refrigerators housed in the classrooms. If a child ate all of the items on his plate, one may wonder if he got a snack. These students arrived at the elementary school at 7:20 a.m., were fed breakfast and lunch. They left at 3:20 p.m. but most of the children rode a bus for up to one hour before arriving home. The loving, caring staff seemed more concerned about taking care of things like feeding children than initiating best practices in the classroom; they knew their children got more from their elementary school than mastering academic standards.

Research Question

This study features one central question. Does the strategy, Text Talk, effect the acquisition of target vocabulary words when applied to read-alouds in kindergarten? Although only one question guided the research, the planning involved to answer the question was extensive and complex. Key elements needed to complete the inquiry

included selecting six picturebooks, choosing six Tier 2 target words from each, creating lesson plans for each book for each class, and designing the assessment instrument. In the following section, a discussion surrounds the components needed to address the question.

General Procedures

Participants.

In the beginning of the study, all of the members of both kindergarten classes were given parent permission slips. Group A had 27 members (18 males and 9 females) and Group B had 28 members (17 males and 11 females). From this pool of 56 children, 43 families gave permission for their children to participate in the study. However, two children moved away after the first week of actual field work, reducing the number of participants to 41 students. Interestingly, a third child moved to another community, missed one read-aloud but then reenrolled in the elementary school. From the request of his teacher, the researcher did the read-aloud privately with this child so that he could reenter the study. After the study began, the principal decided to open a third kindergarten classroom because of overcrowding and moved eight children to a Readiness Kindergarten Program down the hall. The Kentucky Department of Education has determined that cap size in kindergarten should be 24 students. Three of the children had permission to participate in this study and were brought back for the read-aloud lessons and post-testing on the mornings of the lessons. Class A ended up with 21 students, 14 males and seven females. Class B had 11 males and nine females in the final group of 20 children. Thus, the official number of participants that completed all six read-alouds was 41 kindergarten students (25 males and 16 females).

To maintain equity and fairness, the children without parent permission came to the table where pre-testing and post-testing was completed. All children received a coloring sheet that matched each story, even if they did not get to take the test. The group of children without permission also participated in all group read-alouds and activities thereof. This is appropriate as the researcher was doing lessons that all children may normally receive in a kindergarten classroom. The students without permission often begged the researcher to take the test. The researcher made statements like, "I know you know our new words even without asking you." It appeared that the one-on-one attention each child received at the testing table was the most important part of the activity. In no instances did a child, with or without permission, baulk on coming to the testing table or speaking with the researcher called the Word Woman, according to the kids.

Book selection.

Several steps insured that the final six books selected were appropriate for the use of Text Talk in a kindergarten setting. After the researcher created a Book Review Form, graduate students from Eastern Kentucky University's College of Education evaluated 145 books. This process included the search to find six books that were picturebooks. By definition, this meant that the 32-page book must contain prose and illustrations that rely on each other to tell a story. Although all of the books are fiction, the text includes facts related to environmental education, a choice made by the researcher. Books must contain a readability level, using Fry's Readability Graph, higher than 2.5 grade level. Book reviewers choose eight words from the texts that may be potential target words. Additionally, graduate students subjectively decided whether each book might be culturally appropriate for students in an Appalachian setting. Although their thoughts on

potential target words and context of books are subjective, the information seemed relevant for making better book selections.

The researcher shared the books chosen by the graduate students to a kindergarten class and these students voted on how they enjoyed the book. Listeners rated the books using three choices—happy face, straight face, sad face. For this age, happy face meant that the book was enjoyable and the child liked the story, straight face represented that the book was tolerable but not a favorite choice and sad face meant that the book was not good in the eyes of the student. When asked why students would give a "sad face" rating, many students said, "I did not understand this story." It appears that their lack of understanding relates to the fact that the stories contained unknown vocabulary words. The reader did not apply any vocabulary teaching strategies for books under review. Books with scores of 85% or higher remained in the selection pool.

From the remaining 18 books, the researcher reviewed the selections to determine if books had at least six possible target words. Although many of the remaining books did appear to be strong possibilities, six of these became the obvious choices for the study. One final factor that became the decision for eliminating some of the books was their lack of Appalachian content. Pictures, texts, or combination of the two seemed culturally unresponsive choices. The final six books had readability levels of less than 2.5 grade level, met the definition of picturebooks, contained six Tier 2 words, and seemed to contain information that students from a rural, Appalachian area may already have background knowledge.

Winnie Finn, Worm Farmer and Tops and Bottoms are the favorite book selections by the children in the researcher's kindergarten class and the sample group of

the children for the study. The vocabulary acquired from both Group A and Group B on these two books revealed higher scores than the other books. Even though the results were positive for all of the selected books, one may be curious about children's' enjoyment of a book and their ability to comprehend that given book. This idea was not formally tested but created an interesting observation.

Word selection.

Following the advice of Beck and McKeown (2000), words selected as target words in this study qualify as Tier 2 words. By the definition created by these authors, this category includes words that contribute to text. When omitted from a sentence or passage, the understanding of the reader may change. In addition, Tier 2 words must be included and understood to grasp the intention of an author. An example of a Tier 2 word is the word *wealth* in this sentence extracted from one of the final books, Tops and Bottoms by Janet Stevens: "His father had been a hard worker and a smart business bear, and he had given all of his *wealth* to his son." Simple, if a child did not have an understanding of *wealth* in this example, they would not know what the father gave the son. According to Beck and McKeown, this lack of understanding negatively affects the listening comprehension of children to make sense of the text. Understanding *wealth* would assist the listeners to understand why the bear's son was lazy and did not work hard in the garden; he had too much money to bother with the job.

To aide in the selection process, the researcher omitted Tier 1 words for consideration. These are words that are categorized as simple nouns and verbs that normally are understood by children the age of kindergarteners. In the upper example, words such as *bear, father,* and *given* are examples of Tier 1 words. Tier 3 words are

unacceptable. In the final book selections, there were no Tier 3 words. These words include higher level, content-specific words such as *Declaration of Independence* or *Table of the Elements*. Beck and McKeown (2000) remind readers that spending instructional time on Tier 2 words helps with receptive listening comprehension and seems to be the area where educators need to focus their instruction.

Researcher needs and site selection.

As this study is a requirement for a doctoral student to complete a dissertation, several key considerations became important and relevant to site selection. The researcher is currently a full-time kindergarten teacher striving to obtain a higher level college degree. Selecting a site within one hour of the researcher's place of employment seemed important to reduce the amount of time she was not in her own classroom. Additionally, the researcher is an instructor at EKU for a college class. The researcher felt that it was a good decision not to have taught any of the kindergarten teachers in class because of researcher bias. This eliminated several schools that otherwise qualified as possible sites. Therefore, the researcher chose five elementary schools within the Eastern Kentucky University service region and from the Central Appalachian Region. The schools' free and reduced lunch rates were over 50% and they each have two all-day kindergarten programs that created an opportunity for two groups when delivering the treatment. In addition, the free and reduced lunch rates suggested that the schools contained students from areas of poverty and low levels of literacy. A choice of schools with all-day programs included the longer length of time for individual testing and lessons. The researcher also had to work around the schedules of the teachers and insure that students did not miss special classes like physical education or lunch to do testing.

This was a good decision because the researcher did not finish the two lessons and testing until the end of each day.

Principals from these five sites received letters of interest. From the five, three did not respond, one responded with no interest, and one responded with an interest to participate. The decision to select this site was simple because the principal was the only one to give permission to the research to begin the study. The five original sites for consideration appeared similar according to statistics, but the site selected appeared to be a rural, Appalachian school.

Instrumentation.

The instrument used for the pre-test and post-test was created by the researcher. The investigator patterned this test, *Target Word Inventory* (TWI), after the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT). This test is age-appropriate for kindergarteners because children select one of four pictures that best depicts a vocabulary word. For nonreaders, this choice was appropriate. In the PPVT, three pictures relate to the word in some way and the fourth is an obvious correct answer. The researcher attempted to follow this design on each of the 36 pages (one per target word). For example, for the word *wandered*, all of the pictures contain farm animals much like the illustrations in the picturebook. In three of the pictures, farm animals are laying down. One of the pictures shows a farm animal walking aimlessly around the barnyard making it the correct choice for *wandering*. In most instances, the students seemed to understand their task at testing and made significantly better choices during post-testing. Although the creation of the instrument was subjective, a speech pathologist and school psychometrist helped preview

the instrument because of their familiarity with administering the PPVT. The researcher followed all suggestions made by these two individuals until their final approval.

Interestingly, students with no experience made choices on the pre-test, which suggested inexperience, but the post-testing revealed that their efforts were intentional to select the correct response. For example, several students selected the bottom right picture on every page of the pre-test, indicating they did not know how to choose an answer. However, during the post-test, the students would take time to look at each of the four pictures and find the best choice. On many occasions, the students would say, "That's a picture of our word, isn't it?" Although assumptive, the careful attitude to make the right choice actually made the scores decline on words incidentally exposed to a specific class. It appeared that guessing on the pre-test inflated scores but the children knew that they did not have a word meaning on the post-test causing a decline. In one instance, a child stated to the researcher, "I know that I don't know this word because you didn't teach me it…so I'm not guessing an answer. I just don't know!"

Prior to conducting the six read-alouds, the investigator tested all participants on the 36 target words, six words from each of six picture books. After each read-aloud, the participants were post-tested on the six words for each book. The post-tests continued after each read-aloud until all 36 words were tested. The researcher conducted the read-alouds in two classrooms consisting of 41 kindergarten students. Group A had 21 participants and Group B contained 20 children. The number of the words matched the order they appeared in the stories. Group A received Text Talk strategies on the odd words and incidental exposure on the even words. Group B received the treatment on the

even words and incidental exposure to the odd words. Incidental exposure occurs when a reader simply reads the words within the text but does not explain their meaning.

At the end of the study, the researcher shared unofficial results gathered from the TWI with the teachers. They seemed so proud of their students and enjoyed hearing how many correct answers they selected. The researcher posted all of the words taught during each lesson on a small word wall as lessons were completed. However, the investigator shared word cards with each teacher on the last day labeling the words receiving incidental exposure. They received copies of all six pieces of literature. The teachers agreed to teach the other words to each group of student so that all of the students had the opportunity to learn all 36 target words. The teachers asked the researcher how to pick "good words" from other children's literature. It appeared that the two teachers observed value in the strategy and wanted to use it after the study.

Research Design

By design, this study did not have a control group. Specifically, all of the children received the strategy and heard the stories. However, the researcher built control into the design of this study via the words assigned to students. In essence, the design of this study used participants in each class as treatment and control; thus, this is a quasi-experimental design because the researcher did not assign students randomly to a group. Therefore, all students received instruction on 18 vocabulary words. All students received read-alouds in their classrooms and the reader applied the vocabulary strategy to the students on either the odd or the even words depending on their classroom group assignment. For example, students in Class A received Text Talk on the odd words. Students in Class B received instruction on even words. For Class A, students heard the

even words in the story but the reader did not stop and teach their meanings. Class B also heard the odd words but received no instruction on those target words. Words that receive no discussion are incidentally exposed. Figure 2 offers a pictorial representation of the design of this research project:

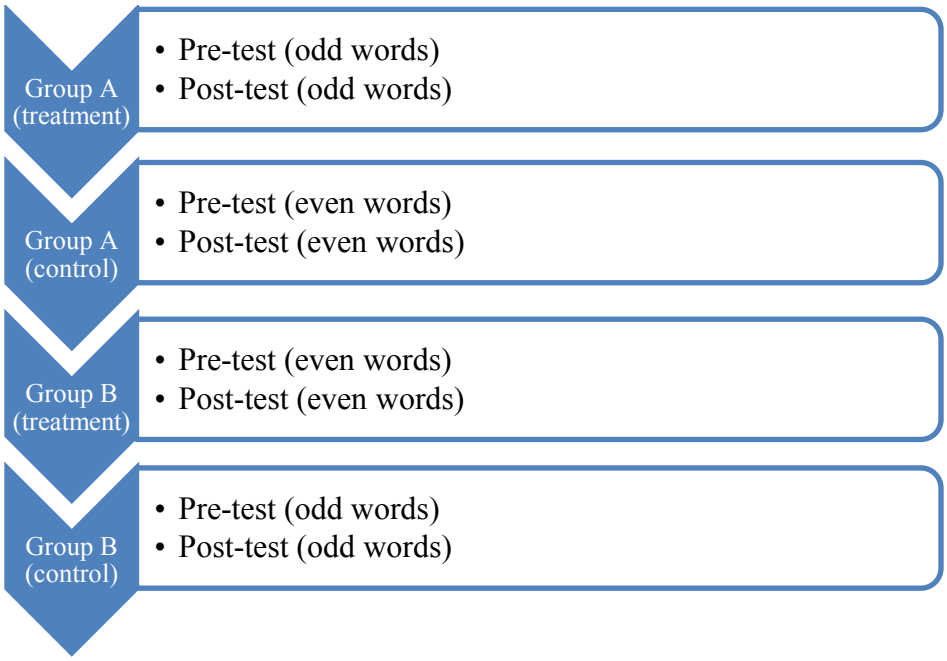

Figure 2. Design of the Research Study.

The investigator designed the study to answer the research question regarding the effectiveness of the strategy, Text Talk, to increase the acquisition of vocabulary words during read-alouds. The design of this study validated the strategy as data suggests that students learn more vocabulary words after receiving instruction during a read-aloud than words incidentally exposed. Using two groups of children, reading the same six books and focusing instruction on different words allowed the researcher to gather data to determine if the strategy increased the acquisition of vocabulary words.

By design, the researcher was the reader and delivered the treatment. This decision controlled extraneous variables. For example, the researcher was concerned

during the planning process that one teacher may not follow the lesson plans like the other. Since the researcher is currently a kindergarten teacher, the choice to do the lessons came naturally. The reader delivered lessons similarly to both groups with the exception of teaching different target words. The pace was consistent and the average time given to each book was 21 minutes. Although some books were longer, contained more words, and had difficult vocabulary, the length of each book was similar when comparing classes. For example, if a lesson took 23 minutes for Group A, Group B would take about the same time. The researcher kept this data because of curiosity, not because of the requirements stated for the study.

On two occasions, the researcher completely aborted the lesson and repeated the lesson at a different time. On the first day, it was obvious that the children in both groups lacked classroom management skills necessary to enjoy a story or receive instruction during a book. The researcher stopped the lesson, created a management plan involving Mr. Potato Head, and returned to the school with a different plan. Mr. Potato Head was a hit, as the children responded and discipline issues subsided. This researcher felt that the children did not manage their behavior as well for their teachers, but responded positively during the read-alouds and testing sessions. An angry parent entered the classroom and created turmoil, stopping the second lesson. After she left, the children received a small break and the researcher started over. The lesson went smoothly and results indicated that the children acquired the meaning of the words as predicted. Although researcher bias is a consideration, the researcher as the reader in this study seemed to strengthen the study and the results. No decisions had a negative impact on results; the needs of the children trumped the needs of the researcher to complete a study. These decisions demonstrate

best practice from anyone involved with schooling. The following results support the use of the strategy to encourage the acquisition of new words during read-alouds in kindergarten and offer support for the methods exhibited.

Descriptive and Inferential Statistics

The researcher received permission by the principal and teachers to conduct the study as needed and given the freedom to apply the treatment, Text Talk, to the words chosen from the texts. As previously described, the teachers did not participate in the read-aloud sessions and gave the authority to the researcher to maintain classroom management, an essential step in the data collection process. During all lessons, the teachers stayed in the classroom and observed their students learning from someone new. The researcher appreciated their presence and willingness to observe and allow the study as planned. On a couple of instances, the teachers made an effort after the lesson to demonstrate their knowledge of the words to the children. For example, after the lesson targeting the word *cloth*, the teacher showed the students her cloth purse and matching lunch bag. She publicly apologized to the children for not telling them earlier that it was *cloth*. The teacher commented to the researcher, "I did not know they needed that word. I've got to do better." The descriptive and inferential statistics give a numerical picture of how the study evolved but anecdotal information strengthens such results.

In the following paragraphs, the researcher describes the participants and their test results. Additionally, the researcher discusses the inferential tests. This study included two kindergarten classes located in a rural elementary school set in the Appalachian area of Kentucky. Parental consent was required in order to become a participant in the data collection process. The 41 students became the sample size for this study, 21 in one class

(Group A) and 20 from the other class (Group B). All members of both classes participated in the read-aloud lessons and had the opportunity to benefit from the activities surrounding the treatment. However, only the individuals with parental consent received pre-tests and post-tests.

In order to understand the decisions based around the statistical testing involved with the study, a discussion surrounding the choices made by the researcher to determine control and treatment groups is necessary (See Figure 1 on page 84). Group A received the treatment on the odd-numbered words; Group B did not receive treatment on these words. This design allows Group A to be the treatment group and Group B to be the control group for odd words. For the even-numbered words, Group B received the treatment and Group A did not receive instruction. This suggests that Group A is the control group and Group B is the treatment group for even words.

Using an independent samples t-test, as shown by Table 2, results indicate that Group A (N=21) performed significantly higher on the pretest, both odd and even words, than Group B (N=20), the pre-test on odd words, $t(39)=4.12$, $p=.00$, and the pre-test on even words, $t(39)=7.30$, $p=.00$.

Table 2. Pre-test Results.

	Group ID	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	df	p-value	Mean Difference
Total-Pre-test (Odd words)	Group A Group B	21 20	3.14 1.40	1.65 1.40	4.12	39	.000	1.74
Total-Pre-test (Even words)	Group A Group B	21 20	4.67 1.30	2.00 0.47	7.30	39	.000	3.37

Preliminary classroom observations suggested that Group A was a higher performing group of children. As this teacher had been teaching in the school for 15 years, she expressed that the principal assigned younger siblings of prior students to her class. Her class contained three students, all of which were the children of faculty and staff who worked in the building. When asked, she stated that no pre-tests aided the placement process when creating class lists to insure equity and a balance in classes.

However, the results in Table 3 indicate that Group B (N=20) significantly outperformed Group A (N=21) on their acquisition of words. Thus, Group B learned more even words, the words taught to them, than Group A learned their odd words.

Table 3. Post-test Results.

	Group ID	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	df	p-value	Mean Difference
Total-Post-test (Odd words)	Group A Group B	21 20	15.95 0.65	1.24 0.93	44.38	39	.000	15.30
Total-Post-test (Even words)	Group A Group B	21 20	3.67 18.00	1.85 0.00	-34.57	39	.000	-14.33

When given a learning opportunity, Group B demonstrated slightly more ability to learn new words. Interestingly, Group B had a lower average pre-test score than Group A.

Using a t-test, the researcher compared Group A on the total of their pre-test results with the total of post-test results. Totals include the correct responses on selected target words, both odd (N=18) and even-numbered words (N=18). Table 4 shows the results for Group A.

Table 4. Group A-Results for the Acquisition of Odd and Even Words.

Group A	N	Pre-test		Post-test		t-value	p-value
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.		
Odd words	21	3.14	1.65	15.95	1.24	30.27	.000
Even words	21	4.67	2.01	3.67	1.85	-2.42	.025

Using a t-test, the researcher compared Group B on the pre-test results with the post-test results. Data includes the correct responses on selected target words, both odd (N=18) and even-numbered words (N=18). Table 5 shows the results for Group B.

Table 5. Group B-Results for the Acquisition of Odd and Even Words.

Group B	N	Pre-test		Post-test		t-value	p-value
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.		
Odd words	20	1.40	.940	.65	.93	3.47	.003
Even words	20	1.30	.47	18.00	.000	158.85	.000

Data collected from the pre-test results on odd-numbered words suggests that students in Class A (N=21) knew an average of 3.14 (SD=1.65) odd-numbered words (N=18) on the pre-test. Students in Class B (N=20) knew an average of 1.40 (SD=0.94) odd-numbered vocabulary words prior to treatment. As Class A received the treatment on odd-numbered words, results suggest that the strategy employed by the researcher enabled children to learn new target words as the average number of vocabulary words increased from 3.14 (SD=1.65) to 15.95 (SD=1.24), t(20)=30.27, p=.00. Class B did not receive the treatment and results suggest that this group of children did not recall the odd-numbered words with an average of 0.65 (SD=0.93) correct answers for Group B on the post-test, t(19)=3.47, p=.003.

Data collected from the pre-test results on even-numbered words suggests that students in Class A (N=21) knew an average of 4.67 (SD=2.00) even-numbered words (N=18) on the pre-test. Students in Class B (N=20) knew an average of 1.30 (SD=0.47) even-numbered vocabulary words prior to the treatment. As Class B received the treatment on even-numbered words, post-test results suggest that the strategy employed by the researcher enabled children to learn new target words as the average number of vocabulary words increased from 1.30 (SD=0.47) to 18.00 (SD=0.00), $t(19)=158.85$, $p=.000$. Class A did not receive the treatment and post-test results suggest that this group of children did not learn the even-numbered words with an average of 3.67 (SD=1.85) correct answers for Group A on the post-test, $t(20)=-2.42$, $p=.025$.

Summary

Since all *p*-values were less than .05, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis in each test. Results indicate that Group A scored significantly higher than Group B on the pre-test. This suggests that Group A, as a cumulative group of children, appeared to be a stronger class given an academic task. However, Group B made significant progress upon completion of the treatment. These results indicate that both groups scored significantly higher after receiving the treatment, Text Talk. Although Group A made significant progress on the post-test, Group B scored 100% on the post-test when tested on even words, the target vocabulary for which they received treatment.

Many factors affect the ability of children to make correct responses. However, all tests revealed that applying Text Talk to pre-selected vocabulary words during a read-aloud is a significant strategy. One significant observation is the ability teachers have to

enable their students to make gains in literacy. This is the reason researchers need to encourage practitioners to attempt new strategies and believe that all children can learn.

Chapter 5

Findings, Conclusions, and Implications

In 1994, on International Literacy Day, President Clinton said, "Literacy is not a luxury; it is a right and a responsibility." Similarly, Payne (2005) stated, "We can neither excuse students nor scold them for not knowing; as educators we must teach them and provide support, insistence, and expectations" (p.3). Most illuminating of all, a child in my study said, "I knowed it, didn't I?" Although these three individuals are speaking from different backgrounds, the underlying thought is the same. When blending these statements, I feel that we must teach children, set high expectations, and they will learn. This study is an exemplary model where research focuses on teaching. I set high expectations for rural Appalachian youngsters to learn new vocabulary words and they accomplished the task. The gap between research and practice is smaller because of the findings of this project.

Included in this chapter is (1) a summary of this study, (2) a review of the findings, (3) conclusions surrounding the research question, (4) a discussion of theories guiding the inquiry (5) implications determined from the study, (6) suggestions for future research, (7) limitations and (8) reflections and observations. This chapter concludes with a summary of the purpose, findings, and conclusions stemming from the results of the study. By nature of this project, I observed the classrooms at the research site. Although gathering information about the school was not part of the data collection, included in this chapter are relevant observations that have indirect effects on the results.

Summary of the Study

When contemplating the formation of my research question, I reflected on life experiences, knowledge, and pedagogy. Even though prior research suggests that understanding vocabulary words is the most important element in reading comprehension, the efforts of educators have not revealed progress. Our rural youngsters still struggle because of our poor attempts. The task of forming a research question that may reveal a technique for developing stronger vocabulary for rural children seemed immense. After reviewing the literature, the following question seemed feasible: Does the strategy, Text Talk, when used in a read-aloud setting increase the acquisition of target vocabulary words? The results of the data collection suggest that the strategy can enhance teaching children new vocabulary words within the confines of a read-aloud in their classrooms. This study delved deeper into this paradigm.

The review of literature included many studies where researchers used read-alouds as a prime opportunity to teach new vocabulary. Many authors agreed that teaching vocabulary is an essential step in learning to read. There are varied approaches used by investigators, including long-term projects, book selection strategies, and data collection plans. Therefore, the design of my study followed the literature and I found support in the work of others for my ideas.

I conducted the research in a small school that set on top of a hill in rural Kentucky. Since I was born in the Appalachian area of Kentucky, the surroundings of the research site seemed familiar even though I had never been to this school. There are two kindergarten classes in the school, which seemed overcrowded. The classrooms appeared to be too small to hold the furniture and the children. I could not find books. In a small

tub in one classroom, there were books, all tattered with pages missing. The teachers told me that it was useless to have books because the children tore them up. After I visited a couple of times, I began feeling that this environment was not optimum for young learners.

I chose six books, each containing six Tier 2 target words. I shared these books to two groups of children from a rural Appalachian school. One group received instruction on three of the words per book and the other group received instruction on another three words. With my guidance, the children seemed engaged as they acted out the words, used their senses to learn more about the words, and demonstrated intelligence as they chanted important words. I involved all of the children in the read-alouds even if they had no parental permission for testing. Along with the lessons, the 41 students enjoyed the attention I gave them as they answered items on the assessment. The actual study was painless for the participants and me. We all appeared to learn new things during each session. I served two roles each time I visited—teacher and researcher. When I read the books to the children and kept them engaged and excited, I was their teacher. As I called each student to the testing table, I became a researcher. I remember telling myself one day, "I wish I could teach in this room. I believe I could make some dreams come true." During the drive home, I began to understand *why* I wanted to earn a degree, do research, and make change.

Why would a researcher be motivated to endure the process to ask a question like this one and strive to find the answer? Surrounding this entire study is my underlying motivation to find ways to offer students vocabulary instruction relevant to their lifestyles. I believe that culturally responsive pedagogy is essential to teaching any group

to read. In this case, the books selected were scrutinized to offer language opportunities which correlate with the everyday lives of rural Kentucky children. Results suggested that talking about text offers a successful strategy, one must wonder if there is a connection between their success and the choice of materials used. I am confused by the consistent use of materials containing words unfamiliar in the culture of focus, whether it is a rural or urban group of youngsters. Why would those involved with schooling in rural Appalachian areas offer experiences unrelated to the students? Sharing my bewilderment is Oomen (2005) as she writes a reflection of her childhood.

> My mother has been teaching me, on the teacher's advice, something called 'sounding out' words. I have gotten better, but I am still at the beginning levels. Still I don't understand the Dick and Jane words. There are too many strange things about the words and the pictures that go with them. Why sidewalks? They happen in cities and they are always clean. How do they do that? And why a dog named Spot? Not Dutch. Or Hunter. Or even Biscuit. What is it that the dog is really supposed to do? He doesn't hunt. And that red wagon? What is that all about? Don't they have a wheelbarrow? (p. 69)….But they [the words] don't mean anything, and I stare out at the playground, where the swing sways in a gust of wet that looks like a cape (p. 70).

Students experiencing read-alouds or reading groups could probably describe the same thing happening to them in book after book, with teacher after teacher, and in classroom after classroom. In most instances, the instructors believe they are doing well to teach children to read. One must wonder if this scenario exists in teacher preparation programs.

Findings

After the data collection stage, I used SPSS to run t-tests that compared the data in different ways. I compared Group A to Group B in the pretest and results suggested that there was a significant difference in the abilities of the two groups. However, Group B made significantly more progress than Group A after receiving the treatment on their words. These findings summarize a familiar saying, "All children can learn."

Additionally, t-tests supported the use of Text Talk as a read-aloud strategy to teach vocabulary. Both Group A, who received instruction on odd-numbered target words, and Group B, on even words, made significant progress acquiring word meanings. In other words, after receiving exposure to the meanings of certain words, these students selected pictures that matched word meanings. When the children did not receive instruction on words, the results indicated that word meanings were not acquired. Overall, the findings suggest that using the strategy, Text Talk, instructors can teach children new words and increase their receptive vocabularies. Even though the mean of the pre-test scores was low, the mean of the post-test was high. The study revealed significance in all tests. This suggests that teachers should apply this treatment to read-alouds to enhance the vocabulary of children.

Analysis

In many arenas, from small school faculty meetings to sessions in Congress, those involved with schooling discuss ways to *bridge the gap*. The use of this expression suggests that there is only one. It is more appropriate to belabor ways to *bridge the gaps*, the many gaps that exist. Within the one topic of vocabulary, we know that gaps occur between economically advantaged and economically disadvantaged children. We also

know that American students experience gaps linking their home language and their school language. Making the dilemma more complex, we recognize the gap between high-quality research and practice. Although researchers would like to bring change, we cannot amend the socio-economic status of our children or the language of their families. However, we can make differences in the pedagogy of teachers across the country. It seems wise to spend our time and efforts discovering strategies to enhance instruction to close some of the vocabulary gaps and improve the literacy of students—the children who will grow up and become parents.

This summarizes the problem guiding this research. As a kindergarten teacher, I am aware of what happens in classrooms and what resources are available. The lack of purposeful vocabulary instruction with young children alarms and motivates me to exhibit efforts to bring improvements directly in the classroom. Testing a strategy to enhance the vocabulary of kindergarten students during their read-aloud experiences guides this study. The literature suggests that there are several strong strategies implemented during read-aloud times and strongly supports read-aloud as an excellent opportunity for teachers to improve the oral vocabulary of youngsters. I selected the use of Text Talk (Beck & McKeown, 2000) because it seemed practical, age-appropriate, successful, and aligns with any book of choice. These authors created a strategy, which allows a teacher to choose culturally relevant materials and choose words for any group of children.

There is a lack of literature surrounding ways to select the picturebooks used for implementing various strategies. The choices made by researchers when selecting materials was vague and illogical. Specifically, many studies did not address this

selection process and would simply include lists of books used without explaining this process. In my opinion, this is a crucial piece to the outcome of any study focusing on read-aloud times. I was able to piece together that choosing culturally relevant books for a given audience was optimum from the research guided by Ladson-Billings (1992, 1995). However, specific strategies for book selection directed toward a specific culture were not included. When focusing on rural Appalachian youngsters, there was no literature available for selecting read-aloud books for this group. I can justify stating that the selection of materials is a crucial piece to the literacy puzzle. As the data analysis reveals, my students made progress using the materials selected. Using Tier 2 guidelines, the words seemed appropriate for this group of students. The materials included selected target words and the props needed to teach their meanings.

For several reasons, I selected the two classrooms located in a small, rural school set in Central Appalachian area of Kentucky. First, the lack of literature targeting this population suggests that we need to focus on this group. Secondly, the rate of poverty existing in this particular community suggested that the students entering kindergarten would already be behind their national peers in the area of language. This school had a free and reduced lunch rate of 99%. Last of all, the willingness of the principal and his teachers to allow someone to offer new strategies and help their students was impressive. This faculty seemed aware of the needs of their population of students and willing to accept new ideas. Their students seemed hungry to learn new things. Some of the rural schools I contacted did not appear to be receptive to outsiders.

The design of this study fits the needs of this particular population of people. I could not justify establishing a typical treatment and control group. Although I knew that

this was a study for the purpose of research, I could not miss the opportunity to design the project so that all of the kindergarteners in this small school receive lessons and learn new vocabulary words. Many other studies provided the strategy to one class or group and simply read books without explicit instruction to the other. I wanted to design a study where all students could learn and receive fair treatment. This desire led to the establishment of a plan where both classes became the treatment and control group for the other. By reading the same six books yet teaching three different words using Text Talk to each group, I exposed all students, with permission, to the strategy.

In conclusion, I was able to teach 18 words to two classes of children by design. The strategy, Text Talk, appears to be a strong instructional technique for teaching vocabulary to kindergarten students, thus increasing their receptive language level. Although the target words warrant revisits and more practice, the strategy did show significance for a short amount of time. The students benefited from our time together as demonstrated on the post-test.

Discussion of Theories Guiding the Inquiry

During the first five read-aloud lessons, I contemplated the theories chosen to guide this project. I wondered if I conceptualized the way children learn in a feasible way. As defined by Bandura (1994), "Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance." On the day of the final read-aloud, one young boy said, "I'm gonna learn all three words today." A little girl, with attitude in her voice, echoed, "So am I." I realized that the theoretical premise of the study was working. These children believed that they could learn new words. By offering systematic, direct instruction, the students behaved like learners.

In essence, I turned the hourglass repeatedly. Words and pictures fell through blending thoughts and memories. With my guidance, the children learned new information. Piaget (1964) reminds readers that a teacher offering situations to children encourages learning. He also suggests that learning to use language is a crucial step in the long-term formation of knowledge. What better place to encourage the learning of language and giving children a situation in which they can learn, than a read-aloud?

In reflection of the hermeneutic circle, Taylor (1979) discusses the relationship between the parts and the whole. Since each word in a story lends crucial information to the reader, understanding the whole story becomes possible. However, a whole story is necessary to give each word value. A supporting example of this theory is the word *rickety* in the book, Winnie Finn, Worm Farmer. Without the word rickety, the condition of the Winnie's wagon may be unclear. The plot of this story entails her plight to obtain a new wagon for her worms. On the other hand, the word rickety is just a synonym for old and without the rest of the story; the word does not get to be the star adjective used to describe a little wagon. This is a minuscule example of the hermeneutic circle. A larger representation is the way children learn to read. For instance, the relationship between learning to blend sounds to comprehending vocabulary is circular. Without being able to read words, knowing their meaning is not enough to read independently. Yet, reading words is not enough to create literate children. They must be able to assign meaning when they recall words. This theory seemed relevant in many areas of my study. I observed the hermeneutic circle at work every day.

The grains of sand fall through the hourglass of reading continuously. Blending the theories provided by Bandura (1994), Piaget (1964), and Taylor (1979), I witnessed

some understanding of self-efficacy within my students, new learning, and the relationships built between the parts and the whole of many elements in reading. As I turned over the hourglass, the students, the books, and myself, worked together to make words meaningful. Conceptualizing the workings of an hourglass aided in my understanding of the process of sharing read-alouds with children to enhance their vocabulary.

Implications of the Research

Three specific implications stemming from this project warrant discussion. First, teacher may benefit from the inclusion of professional development on strategies such as Text Talk. Secondly, those planning professional development may need to include training teachers and their administrators on the importance of vocabulary instruction and strategies needed to teach children successfully. Lastly, the selection of materials needs attention.

Included in teacher training programs, curriculum and instruction requirements need to contain elements related to the teaching of vocabulary. If pre-service teachers become aware of research surrounding this component of literacy, strategies may become present in practice. Out of the five components of literacy—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—the focus on vocabulary seems to be lacking. I arrive at this concern from my experience and prior training as a classroom teacher. As an adjunct professor, I have concerns that pre-service teachers do not have the awareness related to the teaching of vocabulary. Although researchers agree on the importance of this integral part of learning to read, I am concerned that the plea to focus on read-alouds as tools for vocabulary development is missing.

In some instances, those planning curriculum for teacher training programs do include discussions or theories surrounding a given component for learning, but postsecondary students do not receive actual strategies to accomplish mandates. The teaching of vocabulary during a read-aloud session in kindergarten may be missing from teacher training.

For teachers already instructing young children, professional development may need attention in the field of literacy development. As researchers make headway with better strategies to teach vocabulary acquisition, administrators need to provide opportunities for instructors to learn better ways to teach. Professional development can be expensive and time is limited. However, the data gathered in this study implies that an emphasis on the literacy component, vocabulary, needs attention. Providing teachers best practices surrounding vocabulary instruction may benefit students in all areas of the curriculum. Professional development is an ongoing learning process involving those in the field working under the supervision. Teachers need coaching through the process of using Text Talk or other strategies that enhance the acquisition of vocabulary. Although this concept requires hard work and collaboration, it is obvious that bringing these opportunities to teachers may bridge the vocabulary gap between research and practice. The review of the literature informs readers that teaching vocabulary is essential and offers strategies for serving children. Professional development may be the avenue for making the focus on vocabulary development possible.

Selecting materials is an on-going process in classrooms, schools, school systems, and state boards of education across the country. Publishers advertise that reading series are “nationally recognized”. I understand that national reading standards are essential.

We want children across the United States to become literate. For example, I believe that all children need to understand blending sounds or adding a prefix can change a word's meaning. However, who is selecting the materials used for teaching the standards? Who is authoring reading series for students and teachers in the northwest region? Do politicians have the credentials necessary for selecting books placed on a state bid list? Who really knows the needs of a given group of children? In this study, the success of the small sample of students correlates to the materials used. Picturebooks appear to be a strong choice in the materials list. This study implies that the search for relevant materials may require attention.

In summation, this study implies that we need to give attention to current practices in the classroom. This may include change in the way that we instruct pre-service teachers, improve the practices of teachers in the field, and select materials. Young children, and their teachers, need to *touch* learning. When bringing research to practice, we must remember that the efforts of researchers are invaluable only if they make it to the field. Bringing change means giving children what we know is best.

Future Research

Several areas warranting more investigation stemmed from this study. A future project may entail the selection process for books read aloud to children. Researchers may need to investigate whether teachers feel permitted to try new approaches when administrators mandate certain reading series to guide instruction. An inquiry into the knowledge of administrators concerning the teaching of vocabulary may need attention. Additionally, studies may need to probe into the decisions surrounding professional

development. Although many areas or gaps in the literature exist, these four distinct projects warrant investigation.

The review of the literature suggested that there is a missing element. Researchers are vague as to the selection process of books used during read-alouds. I understand that children may enjoy thousands of different titles. To select a book in a purposeful manner directly needed to teach vocabulary should be investigated. The authors of many studies did not explain the selection of books. Some authors mentioned specific titles but did not offer reasons for the selection. I felt that selecting books with purpose was crucial. I wanted to choose stories that are relevant to the audience receiving the instruction. In my experiences, when I am focusing on the acquisition of word meanings, I believe that students have more success if the theme of books is culturally familiar. Although my study offers significant results to readers, the selection of books was not directly tested. I would like to create a study comparing the success of learning new words when some stories seem culturally relevant and other stories appear to be irrelevant for the population of learners. This may lead researchers to develop a selection process for use in schools.

When conducting this study, the teachers made alarming comments related to their freedom to attempt new strategies unless mandated by administration. They seemed impressed by their own students and their abilities to learn new vocabulary words. I gave the two teachers the word cards for future use; they expressed their interest in trying the strategy on the words but said that they would not attempt the strategy. It did not fit the currently mandated curriculum. When I asked them to share their reasons, they both expressed fear. I would like to know if teachers feel constrained to make curriculum

decisions on their own. In other words, are teachers empowered to take full responsibility for the learning of their students?

Administrators may be unaware of the small steps needed to improve literacy. I realize that there are many responsibilities lying on the shoulders of our administrators. It may be that these leaders simply lack knowledge needed to guide their teachers. I would like to know if elementary school administrators have training needed to understand the strategies that their own teachers may employ. Limited to teaching vocabulary, do principals have the knowledge of teaching literacy necessary to support their teachers in reading instruction?

Along with thoughts surrounding administrators, I am curious about research projects designed to investigate professional development. Results may be interesting if researchers probe into the decisions made to offer one type of professional development opportunity over another. How much voice do teachers have to get assistance in one area over another? Are administrators aware of the true needs of teachers? Are teachers embarrassed to ask for help in a given area? Better yet, do educators know that teaching vocabulary is crucial? The questions surrounding the design of professional development are endless. However, I have been unable to find one workshop or other opportunity for teachers to learn new vocabulary techniques. This area also needs investigation.

Limitations

With the assistance of my doctoral committee, I attempted to create a study with few limitations. However, three limitations to this study seem evident: (1) time, (2) using the researcher as the interventionist, and (3) the lack of an instrument needed to evaluate texts. Although unavoidable, these limitations warrant discussion.

The lack of time seemed relevant. In this study, there was no opportunity to give repeated read-alouds linked to Text Talk. I collected data during a short term, after only one exposure to each target word. This limits information to a short-term recall of word meanings. I wish that I could have revisited words and their meanings with the students repeatedly to make sure that the target words became part of their long-term memory. Time did not allow this process.

Some may perceive limitations exist because I am the researcher and the interventionist for one study. The review of the literature revealed other studies where researchers are involved, especially in the data collection process (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Blachowicz & Obrochta, 2007). However, my study involved only one investigator—me. In some ways, I controlled for variance in the way the two groups received Text Talk because I conducted lessons in parallel ways. Although the words are different, I based lessons featuring the same picturebooks; I tried to use voice inflections at the same places, and attempted to use materials equitably. However, this element is a limitation.

Additionally, the plan to create an instrument needed to evaluate texts is a limitation. Because of the absence of such an instrument and advice from prior researchers, this missing element creates a restriction. As with many research projects, investigators create ways to find out more about processes. This research project is no different. Once again, I relied on the expert advice of members of my doctoral committee, opinions of graduate students in the field of education, and librarians. With the help of these people, I created an instrument needed to evaluate picturebooks for the

purpose of teaching vocabulary during a read-aloud session. This process is a limitation to this study due to the lack of prior tested instruments.

Reflections and Observations

Keeping focused on learning needs to be a priority in our schools. I concluded that this paradigm is somewhat obvious but not happening in all classrooms. Instructional time needs to be just that—a time to teach. As a kindergarten teacher, I know that we spend a certain amount of our day on non-instructional tasks, like bathroom breaks, snack time, eating lunch, playing outside, and walking from place to place. This type of schedule is typical, age-appropriate, and unavoidable. However, during the school day, it is best practice to set aside times for pure instruction, teaching. The children in my study seemed confused between time to stay on task for learning and time to be off task. Prior to initiating the treatment planned for this study, I realized that we must set high expectations for children. They must know that they are coming to school to learn new things. I believe I take this for granted in my own kindergarten classroom. My study was *not* designed to evaluate a classroom schedule, determine the effects of classroom design, assess the management of behavior, or observe teacher preparedness. However, I could not believe the amount of time spent on non-instructional tasks, the focus on Halloween, collecting food from the cafeteria, and general classroom confusion. In my opinion, there are many reasons why we have illiterate students that have nothing to do with poor vocabulary or family background. We must deal with poor classroom management first.

I made my observation through the eyes of a veteran kindergarten teacher. I realize that things may look different from the viewpoint of an administrator or a researcher. However, the goals of all involved with schooling should include the learning

of children. Conducting this research opened my eyes to other dilemmas facing educators outside the area of instruction. This troubles me. I was able to teach new vocabulary to groups of children using read-alouds as my tool of choice. In order to accomplish this task, I felt compelled to establish a concrete strategy to encourage listening, modify the classroom arrangement to include a "listening" space, and build a relationship with the youngsters that helped them understand that I knew they could learn. On the first day of lessons, I closed the book and decided that I must make decisions surrounding the management of my audience. When I returned to school with Mr. Potato Head, taught a lesson on student expectations, the importance of learning new things, and how to work together, I was able to begin my study.

When I opened the door on the third day, one of the students said, "The word woman is here." I knew that I had created a relationship with these children and had established high expectations. One young man asked me, "How many words are we learning today?" When I told him that we were going to learn three new words, he said, "Just only three." On that day, I told the classes that learning three new words every day could make their brains grow. Several students reached up, grabbed their heads, and checked to see if they were bigger. Although that was a cute observation, the impact on me is tremendous. These children want to learn and can be taught. I hope other educators believe that as well.

Payne (2005) stated, "The greatest free resource available to schools is the role modeling provided by teachers, administrators, and staff" (p. 13). I find this statement powerful. However, I place the words *role modeling* in my positive brain space; this is not always the case. In an elementary classroom, a teacher is a model. Since children

observe *everything* a teacher is doing, we are responsible for the things we do that are negative. When a teacher seems distracted, uninterested, unprofessional, or unintelligent, she is a role model. I agree with Payne that appropriate role modeling is the greatest resource, but only if it is good. The participants in this study demonstrated success as I role-modeled positive reading practices. Immediately, these students responded to high quality instruction. In reflecting on my time in the field, I am more sensitive and more concerned about the responsibility that teachers have for the learning of their students. I want to share this importance with others. Once again, the lack of progress observed in literacy may be role modeling provided by our teachers. Not teaching, not setting high expectations, and not believing are examples of role modeling. Children everywhere, including rural Appalachia, deserve the role modeling provided by a competent teacher, one who understands her role.

When I read Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction by Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002), I knew I had discovered a treasure. Their work makes sense to me and gives readers a strategy for the improvement of vocabulary. I tried to use their strategy, Text Talk, to improve the understanding of target words with a small group of children in rural Appalachia. However, I tweaked their advice to fit the needs of 36 chosen target words. I believe I understand their strategy but continue to worry about my application. Although these authors offer strategies to teach vocabulary, I feel compelled to say that I hope my decisions align with their expectations. I am confident that I made strong instructional decisions based on their recommendations. I am thankful that others perceive this part of learning as an essential step in literacy. My study is stronger because of Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, three individuals I have not met.

The thoughts surrounding an hourglass continue. When you blend a mountain girl who is a teacher, some country kids, and a good book, the grains of sand fall through meticulously. I learned more than how to accomplish research. I want to turn this hourglass over more often.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I made several determinations. First, using read-alouds as a means to deliver vocabulary instruction is beneficial to kindergarten students. The lessons are fun and inviting, the expectations are reasonable yet challenging, and self-efficacy is encouraged as children begin to understand their personal capabilities.

Secondly, teachers can successfully model ways to comprehend text long before students can independently read. Children's body language speaks volumes. The learners in this study sat upright, used facial expressions, and seemed eager as the stories unfolded. At the end of one lesson, a little girl picked up the picturebook I had read. The fellow sitting beside her said, "Don't tear it up." She was handling the book gently, looking for her favorite picture. I believe that he was expressing his understanding that the picturebook had value. From the mouth of a child, I understand that the book became a treasure on that day.

Lastly, educational researchers make efforts to improve opportunities for our nation's youngsters to grow. Making discoveries or finding significance in observations is important. These efforts will lead to the improvement of literacy. However, transferring research to practice is an area worth investigation. Educational scholars must make headway in the field but find a way to put their knowledge into the hands of those who make it happen—teachers. I hope this study can lead to change. Kindergarten

teachers, like me, and the instructors in all grades, need the support of research so that we can implement better strategies for our students. We must remember than all can learn, including adults.

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Appendix A
Letter of Interest

Appendix A
Letter of Interest

EASTERN KENTUCKYUNIVERSITY

Serving Kentuckians Since 1906

Marla R. Muncy
Kindergarten Instructor
Model Laboratory School

521 Lancaster Avenue
Richmond, Kentucky40475-3102
Phone: (859) 622-1041 Fax: (859) 622-506

Dear Principal:

I am a doctoral student at Eastern Kentucky University preparing to complete my dissertation. Currently I teach kindergarten at Model Laboratory School and have taught in the lower primary grades for 27 years. As part of the dissertation process, I am interested in conducting a study in two of the kindergarten classrooms at your school. This study features the effect of Text Talk instruction during read-alouds on the acquisition of vocabulary.

The design of this study requires me to read the same six pieces of children's literature to two groups of children. I have selected six target vocabulary words from each book. One group would receive instruction during each story on three words and the other group would receive instruction on the other three words. Prior to the first read aloud, I would administer a picture test to each child to evaluate their receptive vocabulary on the target words. After each story, I would assess their progress on the target words for that given story. This process would help me determine if the strategy actually increases children's vocabulary.

The teachers of the classes would only be asked to complete a simple observation form during each read-aloud. They would also receive a set of all materials used to keep in their classroom for future use. As read-aloud is typically done in all kindergarten classrooms, I would not be taking time away from the regular curriculum. The researcher-created test would only take about five minutes per child for the pre-test and one minute for the posttest.

As the program at EKU targets rural Appalachia, I felt that your school would make an appropriate place for a study. There is a lack of research focusing on the literacy development of rural children in Kentucky. Hopefully, the collaboration between your students and teachers with me would help make advancements with literacy. Upon completion of this study, your students would have the opportunity to learn the other three words from each book so that each of your kindergarteners would have the opportunity to learn 36 new words.

Thank you for considering this proposal. I look forward to working with you, your teachers, and your students. Together we can make a difference!

Sincerely,

Marla R. Muncy

Appendix B
Letter Requesting Parental Permission

Appendix B
Letter Requesting Parental Permission

EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

Serving Kentuckians Since 1906

Marla R. Muncy
Kindergarten Instructor
Model Laboratory School
College of Education

521 Lancaster Avenue
Richmond, Kentucky 40475-3102
Phone: (859) 622-1041 Fax: (859) 622-5061
marla.baines@eku.edu

Dear Family,

I have been a kindergarten teacher for many years and currently teach this age. I am also a student at EKU trying to do a study to see if the way teachers read to children could teach them new words. I selected this school because it is small and not in a big city.

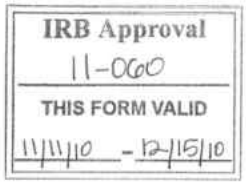
I will read six books to your child's class and teach 18 new words by using a special teaching strategy. I will only do one book per visit and it will take me about six weeks to finish. Before I read any of the stories, I will ask the children if they know what the words mean. After I teach, I will ask the students if they learned the words. The word test will be done individually with each child where he/she will be asked to pick one of four pictures. This test will help me know if they learned the words. To protect your child, I will not know his/her name. A code will be used to identify the children.

I need your permission to give your child the picture test. Your child's teacher will keep the permission form so that I will not know your name either. The form is attached to this letter and I am asking you to send it back to school tomorrow. If you allow me this opportunity, I thank you for letting me work with your child.

The stories that I picked are great and the children will enjoy them. Hopefully, your child will learn new words as a result of this activity! I am excited about reading to the kids!

Thank you,

Marla R. Muncy



Appendix C
Book Selection Form

Appendix C
Book Selection Form

General Information

Title:	
Author:	
Illustrator:	
Publisher:	
Year of Publication:	Number of pages containing text/illustrations:

Fry's Readability Graph: Complete the chart below using the attached graph.

Average number of syllables per 100 words	
Average number of sentences per 100 words	
Estimated grade level	

Theme	Circle best choice:	
Does the story reference a holiday?	Yes	No
Is the theme of the story related to environmental education?	Yes	No
If yes, would the text be considered culturally-relevant material paralleling the environment of the Rural Appalachia area of Kentucky?	Yes	No

Illustrations

Are illustrations found on every page?	Yes	No
If no, on every other page?	Yes	No
Do illustrations provide an opportunity for narrating the story without complete reliance on the text?	Yes	No

Text

Is text found on every page?	Yes	No
If no, on every other page?	Yes	No
Does text rhyme? In other words, is the text rhyming poetry instead of prose?	Yes	No
Does the text take the form of a word book? (No story, just labeled pictures.)	Yes	No

Target vocabulary words: List eight possible words, related to environmental education that the average kindergarten student may not know which are featured within the text of this picture book.

Level of Interest

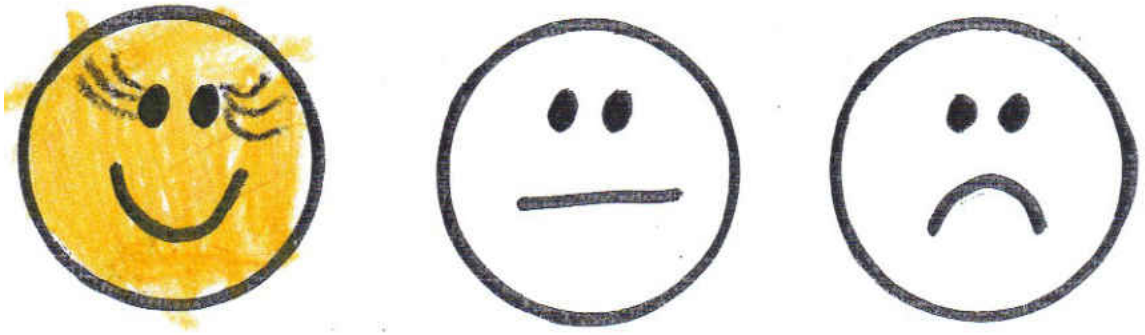
Do you believe that kindergarten age children would find this book interesting? In other words, would this book most likely hold their attention?	Yes	No

Appendix D
Kid Pick Form

Appendix D
Kid Pick Form

Name Serena

Please vote for how you liked the book



Appendix E
Lesson Plan-Group A

Appendix E
Lesson Plan-Group A
Read-aloud Selection: Winnie Finn, Worm Farmer by Carol Brendler

Introduction
Show children the cover of book. Read the title and author's name.

- **What do you notice about the illustrations on the cover?**
- **What do you think it means to be a worm farmer?**

Read
Read the book aloud and use the questions and talking points found on the Text Talk section of this plan to engage children in actively listening and responding to the story. When the word is read in this story, the reader will stop and introduce the vocabulary as described below. At the end of the story, all three words will be reviewed.

Introduce Vocabulary Using Text Talk

squirmy	***rickety***	***sleek***
Explain In the story, Winnie hopes to find squirmy worms. That means that they are wiggly and move a lot. Say the word.	Explain In the story, Winnie took the worms for rides in her rickety wagon. That means the wagon is old and broken in places. Say the word.	Explain In the story, the man wants his dogs to have sleek coats. That means shiny and slick when they are touched. Say the word.
Discuss & Summarize	*Discuss & Summarize*	*Discuss & Summarize*
• Let's think about some squirmy things. If I name an object and you think it is squirmy, wiggle your fingers. If not, keep your hands in your lap. • A rock • A snake • A child who is tired of sitting in his chair • A book • What is the word that means wiggly? *squirmy*	• Let's think about some examples of rickety things. I have an old wooden flower pot that has some nails missing and the dirt falls out. Can you think of some things at your house that are rickety? • What is the word that means old and broken? *rickety*	• Let's think about things that are sleek. If I show you something sleek, please rub your arm. If not, keep your hands in your lap. • Silk fabric • Barbie's hair • Sandpaper • Corduroy fabric (These actual items will be included in the lesson.) • What is the word that means shiny and slick? *sleek*

Appendix F
Lesson Plan-Group B

Appendix F
Lesson Plan-Group B
Read-aloud Selection: Winnie Finn, Worm Farmer by Carol Brendler

Introduction
Show children the cover of book. Read the title and author's name.

- **What do you notice about the illustrations on the cover?**
- **What do you think it means to be a worm farmer?**

Read
Read the book aloud and use the questions and talking points found on the Text Talk section of this plan to engage children in actively listening and responding to the story. When the word is read in this story, the reader will stop and introduce the vocabulary as described below, including the posting of the word. At the end of the story, all three words will be reviewed.

Introduce Vocabulary Using Text Talk

coaxed	***plucked***	***drooped***
Explain In the story, Winnie tried to coax the worms out of the ground. That means that she tries different ways to get them to come out. Say the word.	Explain In the story, the man wants to grow corn so tall that raindrops are plucked out of the sky. That means pulled. Say the word.	Explain In the story, the flowers drooped. That means they are not standing straight and tall; they are bending. Say the word.
Discuss & Summarize	*Discuss & Summarize*	*Discuss & Summarize*
• Let's think about something you have coaxed before. I have coaxed my puppy to come over and eat a piece of cheese. Tell me something you have coaxed. • What is the word that means you tried ways to get something to do what you want? *coaxed*	• Let's think about some examples of things you may have plucked or seen someone else plucked. Have you ever seen someone pluck their hairs from their eyebrows? What else? • What is the word that means pulled out? *plucked*	• Let's think about things that are drooped. If so, bend your hand at the end of your arm. If not, leave your hands in your lap. • A pencil. • An old plastic flower. • A ruler. • A rag doll. (These actual items will be included in the lesson.) • What is the word that means not standing straight and tall? *drooped*

Appendix G
Sample Test Item-TWI

Appendix G
Sample Test Item-TWI

Rickety

WF-3

Appendix H
Score Sheet for TWI

Appendix H
Score Sheet for TWI

Child_____ Group A Group B

		Pretest				Posttest			
squirmy	2	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
coaxed	1	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
rickety	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
plucked	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
sleek	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
drooping	2	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
wealth	1	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
business partners	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
harvest	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
scowled	1	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
profit	2	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
stand	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
swap	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
decompose	1	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
pollute	2	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
going green	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
piped	2	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
cloth	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
dreary	2	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
drizzly	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
pruning	1	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
delicate	2	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
gear	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
blossomed	1	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
wandered	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
eager	1	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
pleaded	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
delighted	1	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
complained	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
polite	2	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
attract	2	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
lumbered	1	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
refused	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
rumbled	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
scrambled	2	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
shivering	1	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

VITA

Marla Renee Muncy was born in Beauty, Kentucky, on August 22, 1962. Prior to entering first grade, her family moved to Danville, Kentucky, where she attended elementary school. She graduated from Danville High School in 1980. The following August, she entered Eastern Kentucky University and in December 1983, received the degree of Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. She reentered Eastern Kentucky University, receiving a Master of Arts in Education in 1986 and a Rank I in 1988.

She is presently a kindergarten teacher at Model Laboratory School located on the Eastern Kentucky University main campus. Marla Muncy has been teaching students, grades K-3, for 29 years.