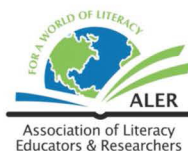Association of Literacy Educators and Researchers Yearbook, Volume 37

Bridging Cultures Through Literacy

Editors:
Sheri Vasinda
Susan Szabo
Robin D. Johnson

BRIDGING CULTURES THROUGH LITERACY

Association of Literacy Educators & Researchers

The Thirty-Seventh Yearbook: A Double Peer-Reviewed Publication of the Association of Literacy Educators and Researchers

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Acknowledgments

This year heralded some changes in both the ALER Yearbook format and in our co-editorial team during this second year of our term. In order to be thoughtful stewards of natural resources and the ALER treasury, the Board voted to publish the Yearbook in its digital format only. This less expensive digital format has a faster turn around and is easily accessed from anywhere there is an Internet connection. Additionally, we welcomed Robin Johnson to join our team as a new co-editor, taking Leslie Haas' place. We appreciate the extra support Juan Araujo provided serving as a guest editor for this volume.

The Yearbook provides a snapshot of the highlights of our Annual Meeting and sampling of some of the proceedings. It would not be possible without the diligent work of many of our colleagues. As always, we have many people to acknowledge for the completion of Volume 37. First, we wish to thank all the authors whose insightful thinking brought forth inquiries that add to and extend the body of knowledge on a wide variety of literacy topics. Next, we would like to thank our editorial board members, as they thoughtfully evaluated submissions and offered additional perspectives to strengthen each piece. This collaboration resulted in the creation of high quality articles and continues to add rigor to this Yearbook's publication. Additionally, we are grateful to the members of the Board of Directors who continually support the editorial team and the publication of the Yearbook, as well as Sylvia Reed, the Publication Committee Chairperson.

Finally, we are very fortunate and grateful for the ongoing support provided by our individual universities. At Oklahoma State University, we appreciate the support of Dean Pamela "Sissi" Carroll of the College of Education and Head of the School of Teaching and Curriculum Leadership, Dr. Pam Brown. We thank Dean Timothy Letzring of the College of Education and Human Services at Texas A & M University-Commerce and Dr. Martha Foote, Department Head of Curriculum and Instruction for their whole-hearted support. An additional thank you is extended to Dean Judy Abbott of the James I. Perkins College of Education at Stephen F. Austin State and Dr. Elizabeth Vaughan Head of

Department of Elementary Education for providing support for this publication. Poet Mattie Stepanek articulates this well with "Unity is strength… when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved." From authors to reviewers to university support and every support in between, this publication is a reflection of each team member's contribution focused on a worthwhile goal.

—Sheri Vasinda, Susan Szabo, Robin Johnson, & Juan Araujo

INTRODUCTION

The theme for the 58th annual conference of the Association of Literacy Educators and Researchers was Bridging Cultures Through Literacy. United Nations diplomat and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize Kofi Annan recognizes literacy as a bridge to a democratic life that supports all types of cultures from poverty to gender to health and well-being as he so eloquently articulates below:

> *Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope. It is a tool for daily life in modern society. It is a bulwark against poverty, and a building block of development, an essential complement to investments in roads, dams, clinics and factories. Literacy is a platform for democratization, and a vehicle for the promotion of cultural and national identity. Especially for girls and women, it is an agent of family health and nutrition. For everyone, everywhere, literacy is, along with education in general, a basic human right.... Literacy is, finally, the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman and child can realize his or her full potential.*

The powerful work we do as literacy professionals is reflected in this thinking and in the thinking that was shared as we gathered together in Delray Beach, Florida. Our annual conference provides opportunities to learn from and with each other, during keynotes and sessions, as well the incidental learning resulting from the conversations and collaborations that occur as mutual interests are discovered during sessions, between sessions, and at social gatherings. ALER is known for a supportive collegiality and camaraderie in which educators and researchers at every stage of their careers learn from each other and are inspired to grow professionally and personally from these encounters.

In the first section of the Yearbook, Parker Fawson's presidential address captured the unique nature of ALER and its role in his professional development, and then moved beyond to capture the changing nature of literacy. In "Creating

Innovators: The Central Role of Literacy Development in a Rapidly Changing Global Landscape", Dr. Fawson described the need for 21st century *dispositions* such as creativity, critical thinking, risk-taking, and collaborative problem solving over a storehouse of facts. He cautioned us not to let STEM initiatives marginalize literacy and the arts.

In section two, Violet Harris, one of our keynote speakers, reminded us to recognize the importance of multicultural literature a one of the critical components of bridging cultural gaps. In helping us understand all cultures through multicultural literature, we can better understand cultures of the people with whom we wish to engage. In recognizing the critical role multicultural literature has for all people, she challenged us "to recognize, understand, and critique our shared humanity, the cultural factors that shape who we are, and the institutional and cultural processes and institutions that position us as valued and privileged or not."

The second section showcases ALER award winners. In the J. Estill Winner's address, Ray Reutzel gave us a theoretical lens through which to view the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for reading. He made strong connections to the way the CCSS are sequenced and designed to Kintsch's (2013) updated *Construction-Integration (CI) Model of Text Comprehension* making the case that CI provides "the single best fitting and most comprehensive explanation of text comprehension processes in connection with [these standards]". He challenged us to consider CI's hierarchy of microstructures and macrostructures, which he connected to the CCSS, with levels of text processing in the way the CCSS are sequenced and clustered placing the use of schema at the end of this process. He asserted that theoretical grounding the standards has the potential to improve the way teachers design instruction to address the standards, thus improving comprehension outcomes for students. A lively discussion ensued among the membership present.

Section four showcases the master's and doctoral research award winners' papers. Our Dissertation Winner, Danell Mieure from Utah State University, compares vocabulary instruction for 5th grade English learners (EL) whose teachers use a communicative and research-based approach specifically designed for EL with students whose teachers use the strategies provided in a Core Reading Program. Her study, entitled *An Exploratory Study of Purposeful and Strategic Communicative Techniques to Teach Vocabulary From Core Reading Programs to English Learners* describes a carefully designed intervention and its effectiveness in supporting EL vocabulary learning. Using a communicative approach to teaching vocabulary integrated with techniques from research and the review of literature on supportive practices for EL, Mieure designed an 15-20 minute

daily intervention that produced results that were statistically more effective for ELs than what was provided by the adopted reading program. With growing numbers of ELs, this research provides a bridge to supportive practices that have a far reach.

As online graduate course programs and course offerings continue to grow, our master's research award recipient, Amber Howard of Missouri State University, tackled a timely question of the equivalency of online vs. face-to-face instruction in graduate courses. In her analysis, *Examining the Equivalency of Online and Face-to-Face Graduate Literacy Courses: A Case Study*, Howard examined how four former graduate students perceived the learning opportunities in two courses they took in a face-to-face format with the same course in an online format. Using Equivalency Theory as a theoretical framework and lens of observation, her participants completed an observation guide of the online course twice per month for a full semester. The results of this study support the claim that when courses are designed equivalently, the learning experiences can be equivalent.

The remaining articles represent a sampling of the sessions presented at the conference and are divided into three categories related to the conference theme and articles contents: Bridging Cultures Through Literacy: Impacting Children, Adolescents, and Families, Bridging Cultures Through Literacy: Impacting Adult Learners, and Bridging Cultures Through Literacy: Impacting Teacher Education. After a peer-review process for conference acceptance, the ensuing articles underwent an additional round of peer review for acceptance in the Yearbook. The articles reflect the theme and broaden it in terms of cultures to include not only cultures of ethnicity, race, gender, politics and economics, but also cultures of new literacies and technologies. The authors address both research and practice providing additional opportunities for considering new thinking and bridging cultures of all kinds demonstrating, as Kofi Annan reminds us, that literacy is the road, or bridge, to human progress.

—SV, SS, RJ, & JA

PRESIDENTIAL
ADDRESS

Creating Innovators: The Central Role of Literacy Development in a Rapidly Changing Global Landscape

Presidential Address

Parker Fawson, Ed.D.
Utah Valley University

Parker Fawson is currently Dean of School of Education at Utah Valley University. He has taught undergraduate and graduate reading and language arts courses at University of Kentucky, Brigham Young University, Utah State University, Arizona State University-West, and Central Washington University. Throughout his university career he has published over 67 nationally published reading and language education textbooks, academic books, and journal articles and has presented at a plethora of state, national and international conferences. Prior to his university experience, Dr. Fawson taught reading and language arts in elementary schools in the primary and intermediate grades.

Twenty-seven years ago, I attended my first CRA meeting. The late Estill Alexander was the President at that time. I was completing my graduate studies in Reading and my mentors talked highly of this professional organization. CRA, and now ALER, has been a great professional home for me to

grow with and contribute to ever since. I appreciate that in ALER, we take our professional obligations seriously but that we don't take ourselves too seriously. Twenty-seven years ago, I thought I knew everything about reading instruction. But now, in the words of Will Durrant, I recognize how little I know and that Education is a progressive discovery of my own ignorance. In effect, my association with ALER has contributed to my realization that there is so much more to learn about literacy development. I embrace this opportunity to continue to grow at this more weathered point in my career.

Picture 1

Several months ago, as I was visiting some of my grandchildren in Kentucky, I came across my two-year-old grandson sitting on the stairs looking intently at the book *Peter Pan*. He had several other books around him and seemed to be content spending time interacting with these books that seemed to have particular meaning to him. Shortly after that observed scenario, I was visiting other grandchildren who were a bit older sitting on their sofa interacting with text on their iPad. These were two very different platforms for reading but both seemed to be intensely engaging and personal to the children.

Picture 2

I reflected on my own experiences with text as a young child. At least what I can recall. These included a daily dose of stories from my mother at naptime. Around the first grade, I received my first book as a gift that was a full color picture book about exotic animals. I loved that text as it opened up a world to me that I could only imagine at the time. These experiences hold deep personal meaning. Advance the years forward to the current day where I find myself as a Dean of a School of Education where I am making decisions with my colleagues about the types of teachers that will be needed in the future classrooms that my grandchildren will enter. We are fairly confident that the demands that will be placed on these children as they become adults will be much different that the ones that confronted us as we made this transition.

I reside in a technology core designated area where Adobe, Google and a myriad of other high tech companies have large, newly designed, corporate offices. These organizations are challenging the traditional expectations of employees to include play and relaxation, along with the value of iteration, and important factors along with professional dispositions of collaboration, creativity, global competence, communication, and critical thinking to name a few.

Work and profession are being redefined. Many of today's top jobs didn't exist 10 years ago (app developers, social media managers, cloud administrators). Some project by 2018 there will be 21 billion network devices and connections globally which is up from 12 billion in 2013. At my institution, we discuss this challenge often in an attempt to be strategic. A Manpower Group study indicated that in the Americas alone, 39% of employers report hiring challenges caused by IT talent shortages. The temptation is to fixate on the need for more STEM focused expertise but this focus will most likely miss the mark. Lost in the STEM discussion is the powerful role of liberal education in building innovators, problem solvers, and creators.

I have spent much of the past four years engaging with educators in China where they have done fairly well in teaching some of their students in STEM subjects and content but they are perplexed as to why many of these same graduates are weak on creativity and critical thinking. They can do the math but they have difficulty framing creative solutions to real world problems. So in this STEM fixated time we are currently in, we also need to discuss the essential roles of writers, readers, and artists and other professions that enact knowledge to complement STEM and enrich the innovative outcomes that are increasingly required by the future. Employment projections are that many of our students will experience multiple career redirections in their adult lives and will need to possess procedural and creative skills in addition to conceptual knowledge.

In a recent meeting I had with school district superintendents and curriculum directors from seven school districts in my service area, I asked what they thought were the most important things to pay attention to related to STEM in an effort to better understand where we should focus our teacher preparation and professional development support. I was somewhat surprised by their response. Almost unanimously, they indicated that they use the term STEM in their curricular discussions but they are not totally sure what it means. Typically, the interpretations seem to be directed at producing more STEM focused coursework but this doesn't really address the underlying concern with STEM, which in my view, must be connected with 21st Century teaching and learning innovations. In fact, I place 21st Century teaching and learning as the overarching frame for instructional focus with STEM competence growing out of these college/career skills. Framing instruction this way, we now have a way to understand the roles of all that we learn in helping to prepare our students for a future that requires a very different skill set and conceptual understanding from what we perhaps experienced in our schooling. This includes our seeing the interdisciplinary nature of learning and creating in very profound ways. The persistence of traditional Carnegie unit thinking will not support knowledge and skills development our children will need to function successfully in the future. One example of thinking outside the instructional box follows.

> In 1294, the Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore was approved for construction in Florence, Italy. The construction of the Basilica continued until 1418 when only the dome remained to be completed. But the challenge with the design of the dome was that it had to be free standing without flying buttresses as had been used in gothic designs up to this point. Typically, these types of domes would be built by construction of a support system underneath built out of wood. But, given that this dome was 171 feet at the base and 144 feet spanning across the open space of the basilica, this method was not possible to use. There wasn't enough timber in Tuscany to provide this type of structural support for the construction. So in 1418, a competition was announced for designing a new solution for erecting the dome. In 1420, work began on the dome with its completion in 1436. Interestingly enough, the individual who was awarded the responsibility for completing the dome was Filippo Brunelleschi who was not an architect or an engineer but was a master goldsmith. In this case, the artist was able to take a complex and vexing design challenge and create a novel solution for its completion. The solution was so effective that the structure is still intact and in use today.

Unfortunately, in a STEM crazed society, we often read of the negative perception placed on the study of non-STEM fields. In a September 22, 2014 article in the Chronicle of Higher Education is one such example. The article was entitled, "Art Schools Work to Erase Image of Graduates as 'Starving Artists'." In this article, Russell Benamy is referenced as his daughter, Erica, informs him of her decision to attend art school. Mr. Benamy wants her to become a chemical engineer such as himself. He laments his daughter's decision by thinking, "$200,000 to play with crayons." However, in the end, he accommodates his daughter's wish to pursue her passion. And in a STEM focused society, Erica will do fine as she will be able to bring creative solutions to as yet undisclosed challenges.

A former student of Robert McKim, a Stanford engineer and professor, describes an early learning task he and his classmates were asked to conduct in a course. Professor McKim would invite his students to draw a picture of their neighbor. He would give them 30 seconds to complete this task. At the end of the allotted time, he would notice the reaction of his students that included lots of laughter, some embarrassment, and even in some cases, individuals expressing apologies for how they represented their neighbor. Professor McKim found the same reactions every time he did this activity with his students. He explained that saying "I'm sorry" is evidence that we fear the judgment of our peers. We are embarrassed about showing our ideas. This fear is what causes us to be conservative in our creative thinking. We are afraid to put our ideas out there on the table at a time when being creative is a critical life skill. He also suggested that it is interesting that children have no issue sharing their picture with others given the same task. We are conditioned to think inside the box and to get it right the first time rather than being comfortable in an iterative process. So how do we create learning environments that allow us to nurture risk taking an iterative thinking? We too often value stability but really need new ideas and vision to be shared. We will need to relearn creativity to be able to meet the demands of the future.

Tony Wagner, Expert in Residence at Harvard University's new Innovation Lab, in May of 2012 responded to this question in a TED talk by suggesting what needs to change in schools to facilitate 21st century skill development in our students. He does this by contrasting what is in place in most classrooms in the United States contrasted with what is needed to create "Innovators."

1. Schools are designed to recognize individual achievement rather than collaborative solutions.
2. Schools focus on instruction on specialization of content rather than the interdisciplinary nature of learning.

3. Most classrooms reinforce risk aversion rather than the power of the iterative process to problem solution.

4. Students are inducted into a passive consumption model rather than a creative knowledge generation process of learning.

5. Students are conditioned to respond to extrinsic incentives vs. learning to be driven by intrinsically motivating conditions.

In the end, what is needed is a new focus on teaching and learning contexts that nurture student collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, communication, global awareness, risk taking, and interdisciplinary solutions to problems. Ultimately, we are interested in the application of learning rather than a static collection of facts. In this vision of the future, it is important to remember that literacy development is at the center of this process of discovery. Imbedded in literacy processes are the 21st century dispositions that Tony Wagner references as essential to creating innovators. In the end, my grandchildren have it right. Read early and read often in a variety of contexts to broaden your abilities in a rapidly changing world. Given this early exposure, they will no doubt navigate a very successful future!

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Bridging Cultures through Literacy

General Assembly Keynote Speaker

Violet J. Harris
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Violet J. Harris is a Professor of Language and Literacy at the University of Illinois. Her research focuses on literature for youth, literacy materials, the publishing industry, and language issues with an emphasis on factors such as race, ethnicity, and language. She is the former co-editor of The New Advocate and AERJ-TLHD and active in several literature and literacy organization including Reading Is Fundamental. Yearly estimates indicate that, out of the 5,000 plus children's books and 2,000 young adult literature books published, less ten per cent are written and/or illustrated by individuals that are African, Asian, Latino, or Native American. What are the economic (multinational publishing companies), educational (inclusion in curricula), personnel (librarians, teachers and others as gatekeepers), popular and digital cultures, and aesthetic (quality of the writing or art) issues that affect the literature? These factors are identified and analyzed.

One of the mandatory behavioral tropes among those whose research and scholarship focuses of literature for youth is sharing an excerpt from a book or reading an entire picture book. I chose to share two poems with the ALER

audience. The first and last, from Jacqueline Woodson's new memoir written as poetry, *Brown Girl Dreaming* (2014).

The first poem, "February 12, 1963," is Woodson's birthdate, sometimes a year of benign events; and other times, a time period characterized by monumental and horrific events in American history such as the bombings of African American churches in Birmingham, Alabama that led to the deaths of four innocent little girls. Woodson deftly weaves her memories and family history in a manner such that the memoir becomes an allegory for those of African descent, and perhaps, resonates with other immigrants and their descendants. Midway through the poem, Woodson writes:

> I am born as the South explodes,
> too many people too many years
> enslaved, then emancipated
> but not free, the people
> who look like me
> keep fighting
> and marching
> and getting killed
> so that today—
> February 12, 1963
> and every day from this moment on,
> brown children like me can grow up
> free. Can grow up
> learning and voting and walking and riding
> wherever *we* want (p. 1-2).

The second poem, "Each World," encourages the reader or listener to envision a new world brimming with the promise that an individual or entire group can realize personal dreams that a nation can fulfill its constitutional rights. Woodson begins the poem,

> When there are many worlds
> you can choose the one
> you walk into each day (p. 319).

Brown Girl Dreaming garnered numerous accolades such as starred reviews in major review journals, The National Book Award in the juvenile literature category, and honor book status for the Newbery Medal and the Coretta Scott King

Award (Roback, 2014; Morales, 2015). Woodson is one of the most consistently honored writers for youth for her picture books, poetry collections, and novels.

Despite critical accolades for her writing and a fervent and loyal readership for her works, Woodson is not immune from the effects of stereotypes, bias, or racism (Hannah, 2014; Reid & Kirch, 2014; Roback, 2014). During the awards dinner at which she received the National Book Award for Young People's Literature, Daniel Handler, Woodson's friend and the best-selling author of the *Series of Unfortunate Events* and numerous well-regarded picture books and novels, told a watermelon joke when introducing Woodson. Watermelon jokes about African Americans are fraught with historical baggage that can conjure up myriad images, many of which are stereotypes and painful (Finney, 2014). Woodson delineated the reasons why Handler defiled her moment of glory in a searing essay published in the *New York Times* (Woodson, 2014). More than likely, winning literary awards in 2015 for *Brown Girl Dreaming*, Newbery Honor Medal and a Coretta Scott King Medal for fiction provided Woodson with some solace.

Have you heard of Woodson, read a book written by Woodson? Assigned a book written by her, or purchased one of her lyrical works for yourself, as assigned reading for your classes, or any other reason? If you answered no about Woodson's books or others that we place under the multiculturalism label, then, you have missed an intellectual and aesthetic adventure that could enhance your sense of humanity, expand your knowledge, and provide emotional moments ranging from the humorous, to the sad, and/or joyous. Therein lies one of the major issues that help determine whether or not we can bridge cultures through literacy: how to place multicultural literature in the hands of readers?

One may question whether literature should bear the burden of engendering racial understanding or ameliorating racism when laws, customs, political activism, and even war have not resulted in cultural bridges. Consider the example of revered author, Dr. Seuss. Surprisingly for some, Dr. Seuss created racist images early in his career that were quite vicious in their depiction of African Americans, Jews, and the Japanese Minear, 1999; Edwards, 2012). One might argue that Dr. Seuss reflected the attitudes, prejudices, and racism of the time period and judging him by today's standards of racial civility, although a solid argument can be made that the attitudes held by some in the twenty-first century parallel those held in 1930s and 1940s. Dr. Seuss experienced a metamorphoses and he ceased creating the harmful and racist images and became notable for his books and his anti-war and environmentalist stances. Or, if one is troubled by the political emphasis on literature, then should the fundamental purposes of literature remain enlightenment, knowledge, entertainment, and perhaps, transformation of the individual? Can multicultural literature exist in a political vacuum?

The late author, Walter Dean Myers, winner of nearly every major award in children's and young adult literature along with being selected as the United States Children's Literature Ambassador, wrote prophetically about the absence of literature for children of color and Native Americans along with commentary about the aesthetic and inescapable, perhaps, political aspects of multicultural literature in the 1986 and in 2014. He wrote in a recent article in the *New York Times* (2014) before his death:

> TODAY I am a writer, but I also see myself as something of a landscape artist. I paint pictures of scenes for inner-city youth that are familiar, and I people the scenes with brothers and aunts and friends they all have met. Thousands of young people have come to me saying that they love my books for some reason or the other, but I strongly suspect that what they have found in my pages is the same thing I found in "Sonny's Blues." They have been struck by the recognition of themselves in the story, a validation of their existence as human beings, an acknowledgment of their value by someone who understands who they are. It is the shock of recognition at its highest level.

Myers' philosophy has remained constant throughout his career and he succeeded in crafting literary works that speak to youth across borders including those that are seemingly intractable such as race, gender, and class.

A younger generation of authors advocated for the critical necessity for multicultural literature, among them, Christopher Myers, the son of Walter Dean Myers. Undoubtedly, Christopher has been nurtured and influenced by his father as evident in their artistic collaboration, for example, *Harlem* (Myers, 1997). He, too, has an emerging philosophy on the importance of multicultural literature. His metaphor about the literature expands on the original theoretical framework developed by children's literature scholar, Rudine Sims Bishop. Sims Bishop (1990) argued that children needed literature that would provide mirrors (to see reflections of themselves), windows (to see outside their surroundings), and sliding glass doors (works that would allow for an unfettered imagination about the broader world). C. Myers (2014) argued that children also needed and demanded road maps in addition to mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. The road maps he envisioned would offer children a plan for moving beyond restrictions based on various markers of identity and geographic locals culminating in children envisioning themselves as valued citizens of the world.

In an article appearing in the same *New York Times* issue cited above, Christopher Myers articulated a vision for a new millennium (2014):

> *This apartheid of literature — in which characters of color are limited to the townships of occasional historical books that concern themselves with the legacies of civil rights and slavery but are never given a pass card to traverse the lands of adventure, curiosity, imagination or personal growth comes from recognizing oneself in a text, from the understanding that your life and lives of people like you are worthy of being told, thought about, discussed and even celebrated. The children I know, the ones I meet in school visits, in juvenile detention facilities like the Cheltenham Youth Facility in Maryland, in ritzy private schools in Connecticut, in cobbled-together learning centers like the Red Rose School in Kibera, Nairobi — these children are much more outward looking. They see books less as mirrors and more as maps. They are indeed searching for their place in the world, but they are also deciding where they want to go. They create, through the stories they're given, an atlas of their world, of their relationships to others, of their possible destinations.*

Despite trepidations about the instrumental functions attached to literature, the creative and cultural product has been a key mode for introducing youth to those that do not share their race or ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and so forth. Various individuals: Mrs. A. E. Johnson, Mary White Ovington, W. E. B. Du Bois, C. G. Woodson, Augusta Baker, Pura Belpre, and organizations: the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the American Library Association (ALA) urged for and supported the creation of literature about colored people, and later, Negroes, that was not stereotyped or racist from the late 1800s through the 1950s and later (Harris, 1990; Bishop, 2007). Many of us are unaware of their efforts for any number of reasons. In the 1950s and 1960s another generation attempted to bridge cultural gaps in literature by advocating the publication of the diverse literature including Charlemae Rollins, Augusta Baker, Effie Morris, Elinor Sinnette, and the various authors, teachers, critics, librarians, editors, and activists. They and others coalesced to form the Council on Interracial Books for Children (Banfield, 1998). The contributions of the aforementioned individuals have been allocated scant attention children's literature textbooks over the decades.

A collective amnesia seems to permeate the field of literature for youth. Usually, Nancy Larrick (1965) is credited with sparking an interest in multicultural literature with the publication of her eponymous article, "The All-white World of Children's

Books." Larrick conducted research on the "Negro" presence in children's literature and she discovered that the appearance of Negro characters was significantly limited and quite often, stereotyped. In some ways, the impact of Larrick's article paralleled, to a lesser degree, the impact of Harriet B. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Perhaps, a sense of shame about the depiction of Black children in children's literature in the midst of the fight for equality during the Civil Rights movement spurred actions among publishers. More books written by Blacks were published and later, in the 1980s-2000s, increased numbers of books written and illustrated by other minority groups: Asian American, Latinos, and Native Americans. The increasing inclusion of other groups under the category of "minority," necessitated different ways to characterize the ideas, processes, and cultural institutions associated with "minority literatures." Thus, ideas about cultural pluralism, cultural diversity, multiculturalism, and anti-racism emerged.

In the past, ideas about multicultural literature were synonymous with the literatures of "minority" groups: African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans (Sims-Bishop, 1997). Gradually, other marginalized groups – girls, those with disabilities, LGBT, and religious groups – sought inclusion, sometimes contested, within the category (Rudman, 1984). Still others argued for international literature, especially the literatures of European countries or Australia and New Zealand, or most notably, events such as the Jewish Holocaust as an important component of multicultural literature (Rochman, 1993).

In contrast, my conception of multicultural literature places the literature of African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans as the primary considerations and encapsulates a global perspective through inclusion of countries in Africa, Asia, and Central and South America. Other aspects of diversity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and disability are included but are considered in terms of their intersection with race or ethnicity. That way, I would argue, "whitewashing" does not occur that results in the marginalization of racial issues. My experience teaching children's literature courses for nearly thirty years is that many White students would much rather discuss the Holocaust than slavery, the modern Civil Rights Movement, internment of Japanese Americans, or Latino immigration. Equally important, my preference for discussing gender, sexual orientation, disability, and religion through the prism of race or ethnicity decreases the tendency to essentialize race and exclude people of color and Native Americans from discussions about gender or disability, for example. In prior scholarly writing, I identified Native Americans as "people of color." This perspective has been contested, most notably by Debbie Reese in an article on American Indians in Children's Literature website. Thus, I have chosen to not describe Native Americans as "people of color."

A personal anecdote aside, what are some ways to gauge how multicultural literature is received? One gauge, although imperfect, for determining the

reception of books rests in their appearance on best-seller lists. These compilations generated from book sales in brick and mortar stores, online retailers, and through sales to the library and school markets, are accurate to a great degree but are not without the potential for error. Best-seller lists cannot determine the impact of books through sharing or library checkouts. Nevertheless, appearances on best-seller lists can serve as a barometer of multicultural literature's reception among buyers and readers.

Twelve books written by people of color and Native Americans appeared on the 2013 list of bestsellers compiled by *Publishers Weekly* (Swanson, 2014). These books represent sales of 50,000 plus copies. Most of the books are categorized as children's literature except *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* (Alexie, 2007), Marie Lu's novels, *Legend* (2011), and *Prodigy* (2013), which are more often assigned to the young adult market.

TABLE 1
Best-selling Books Written by People of Color and Native Americans in 2013

Author	Title	Approximate Number of Books Sold
R. R. Russell	The Dork Diaries, #6	500,000+
R. J. Palacio	Wonder	5000,000+
P. Munoz-Ryan	Esperanza Rising	210, 739
S. Draper	Out of My Mind	199,478
S. Alexie	The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian	185, 757
T. Lai	Inside Out and Back Again	180, 162
C. P. Curtis	Bud, Not Buddy	150, 000+
L. Erdich	The Birchbark House	124, 401
L. Yep	Dragonwings	120, 937
C. P. Curtis	The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963	100,000+
M. Lu	Legend	50,000+
M. Lu	Prodigy	50,000+

While these sales figures are significant, we should delay any exuberant celebrations. Why? Ponder these contrasting data: 125 children's books sold 200,000 plus copies of which, only two written by people of color and Native Americans achieved this pinnacle: *The Dork Diaries, Book 6* (Russell, 2013) and *Esperanza Rising* (Munoz-Ryan, 2000). Among hardbacks, 117 sold 100,000 plus copies; and, people of color wrote ten of these. Paperbacks with sales of 100,000 or higher numbered more than 100; people of color and Native Americans wrote

ten of these books. For e-books, the figures were quite dismaying, perhaps be-cause they offer a hint about markets outside of school and library domains: 155 e-books sold 25, 000 or higher. Only one book written by a person of color appeared on this list and that book was *Wonder* by R. L. Palacio, (2012). Notably race is not central to the novel or another novel that achieved best-seller status, *Out of My Mind* (2012); instead, disability and its effects on family members, friends, peers, acquaintances, and strangers, is the key plot conflict for both novels. Think about these data in relation to the ideas articulated in the *New York Times* articles written by Walter Dean and Christopher Myers and their effects on the availability of the literature and children's access to that literature. What accounts for the inability of the literature to garner consistent sales?

A variety of factors may account for the differences in sales although sales are not the sole indicator of a book's reception or its impact on readers. For example, some children acquire access through public or school libraries or by sharing and trading with friends. First, the number of books published in 2013 with sig-nificant content featuring African American, Asian/Pacific American, Latino, or Native American people is shockingly low (Cooperative Children's Book Center. Choices, 2015). Children's literature scholars typically state that approximately 5000 children's books are published yearly (Kiefer, 2009).

The data in the following chart provide startling evidence about the pau-city of multicultural literature (CCBC, 2014; 2015). Column A represents the books featuring members of the identified group; and, Column B denotes those written or illustrated by people of color and Native Americans. These data are based on the approximately 3000 books for youth that were received at the offices of the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The CCBC has compiled these statistics for more than a decade in its yearly publication, *CCBC Choices*.

TABLE 2
Books Depicting People of Color and Native Americans, 2013

Racial or Ethnic Group	Column A	Column B
African Americans	93	67
American Indians/Native Americans	34	18
Asian Americans	61	88
Latinos	57	48

Approximately 5% of the total books published in 2013 were written or illus-trated by or had significant content about people of color. Given the residential segregation that exists, it is likely that many of us will only interact with people

of color through print and digital materials. One would think that the situation warrants many more books about these groups if for no other reason than providing children with books that go beyond the "all-white world of children's books" identified by Nancy Larrick fifty years ago.

Second, although the consumer market dominates, school and public libraries purchase a significant percentage of children's books (Milliot, 2014; Nowell, 2015). Funds are limited and librarians must meet their clients' reading demands. If you have not cultivated an openness that allows you to select books on the basis of quality coupled with the belief that quality writing emanates from many different types of people, then your collection will possibly be monolithic (Hall, 2008).

Third, children's only bookstores have been in the vanguard of promoting children's literature. A small percentage of bookstores exist that focus solely on a particular racial or ethnic. These bookstores would likely promote multicultural literature. Similarly, the number of children's only bookstores in the country has declined (Rosen, 2007). Added to the mix is the fact that bookstores are located in communities in which residents have the disposal income and/or inclination to spend $10.00-25.00 for a single children's book. Furthermore, many bookstores do not stock significant numbers of multicultural literature (Park-Dahlen, 2015).

Fourth, publishing companies may need to rethink marketing strategies. After, thirty years of being an advocate for multicultural literature, I am constantly amazed by the number of people I encounter that have never read any multicultural literature or lack knowledge about where to purchase the books. Again, the situation speaks to the need for marketing divisions to utilize niche marketing through traditional methods *and* social media. For example, think about the impact of articles written by Walter Dean Myers and his son Christopher Myers that appeared in the *New York Times* on March 15, 2014. One concrete result of those articles and the data released by the CCBC was a social media campaign, We Need Diverse Books (weneeddiversebooks.org).

The ad hoc group has engaged in actions that will enable them to impact children's book publishing in a manner comparable to that of the Interracial Council on Books for Children. The group members write and illustrate books, publish articles, give interviews, and engage in other actions such as the creation of an award for multicultural literature named in honor of Walter Dean Myers. Two other models for reaching an expanded audience are evident in the way the Pleasant Company marketed the Addy series during the early 1990s by attending the Family Reunions sponsored by the National Council of Negro Women. That was pure genius. Or, Lee and Low Publishing Company's editors, marketing personnel, and owners take full advantage of social media through blogs, interviews, articles, panels, and many other activities. Additionally, publishing companies must allow writers and illustrators to develop an audience. For example, send

them as participants in small literature festivals for youth, such as the Youth Literature Festival sponsored by the University of Illinois in which 21 authors engaged with approximately 14,500 students in school visits in six counties in central Illinois. Additionally, authors could initiate digital author appearances at schools, especially those schools less likely to sponsor author visits such as those in low-income communities, urban and rural areas.

Fifth, those that teach reading methods or children's and young adult literature courses need to act in a conscious fashion and assign multicultural literature as required texts in our courses. For many of the individuals whom we are training to become teachers or librarians, the multicultural books we share are likely to be the first or one of the few they have read. Further, we have to guide our students to an understanding that simply saying a multicultural book is only for the children depicted in the books is not appropriate pedagogy. When this statement or variations of it are made, students mean White children but are usually too embarrassed to make that statement. Another common avoidance statement is that children, the unspoken White child, cannot "relate" to the book. These are anti-intellectual stances that prevent children from developing the dispositions needed to interact in a world that is forever going to be multiracial, multilingual, multicultural and, well, less White. Ideally, literature allows us to envision "the Other" as human beings that may share a different race, gender, ethnicity, language, religion, sexual orientation, or those with disabilities. The recognition of shared humanity, I argue, is one of the critical steps in acquiring an understanding of another culture through the vicarious experiences of literature.

Sixth, our research must include multicultural literature when texts are used and those texts may need to be bilingual or contain vernacular languages, e.g. African American English. If we are examining children's responses to books featuring children that work, then consider including *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Taylor, 1975; 1991); *The Circuit* (Jiménez, 1999); *Kids at Work* (Freedman & Hine, 1994); *First Day in Grapes* (King-Peré, 2002); *The Starfisher* (Yep, 1992) and any number of multicultural texts. Equally important, we need not have children of color in our classrooms in order to conduct this research.

Finally, I believe that literacy organizations have to create a space for the exploration of multicultural literature on a consistent basis. The presentations must be as common as sessions on The Common Core Standards are now. A few organizations, notably the American Library Association, International Literacy Association, and the National Council of Teachers of English, are in the vanguard of advocacy for multicultural literature. Their annual meetings are filled with presentations about diversity issues and writers of color and Native Americans often win the awards sponsored by the organizations for literature. Indeed, the

American Library Association pioneered in the creation of literary awards that honored Native American and writers of color.

In order to bridge cultural gaps, would you not agree that a paramount task would be to gain an understanding of the cultures of the people with whom we wish to engage? I want us to recognize, understand, and critique our shared humanity, the cultural factors that shape who we are, and the institutional and cultural processes and institutions that position us as valued and privileged or not. Multicultural literature is one critical component of that process.

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Comprehension and the Common Core Standards: What is the Plan?

Estill Alexander Laureate Award Lecture

D. Ray Reutzel
University of Wyoming

D. Ray Reutzel recently accepted the position of Dean of the College of Education at the University of Wyoming. Previous to this appointment, he was the Emma Eccles Jones Endowed Chair, Distinguished Professor, and Director of the Emma Eccles Jones Early Childhood Education and Research Center at Utah State University. He has formerly served in a variety of administrative roles as a department chair, associate dean, and vice-president for academic affairs and provost. Dr. Reutzel is the author of more than 220 refereed research reports, professional articles, book and handbook chapters, books and handbooks, and monographs in reading, literacy and early childhood education. He has received more than 10 million dollars in external and internal grants and contracts from public and private sources. He is an elected member of the international Reading Hall of Fame and conducts research on early literacy in grades K-3.

Abstract

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have ushered in a new era of educational reform. The CCSS are attacked on the left because they are CORE and on the right because they are COMMON. Most states have adopted the CCSS or some form of the CCSS as all or part of their state standards. One of the most critical cross cutting elements in the CCSS is how the standards endorse effective teaching of reading comprehension. Teaching comprehension in the early years is a new idea to many teachers and to the educational community at large, since the traditional view of teaching reading has tacitly or even explicitly endorsed by policy and practice that children first learn to read, and then; read to learn. As a result, there has been little research focused on building the foundations for and teaching young children reading comprehension.

This presentation shows how the CCSS, intentionally enacts into classroom practice a well-developed and highly regarded theoretical framework for teaching reading comprehension as grounded in Walter Kintsch's (2013) Construction—Integration (CI) Model of Text Comprehension. An examination of the connections between the Common Core State (CCS) reading anchor standards and the major elements of the CI model of text 1) comprehension and 2) integration(Kintsch, 2013) shows how these align rather well. In this presentation, I will describe in detail Kintsch's (2013) Construction—Integration (CI) Model of Text Comprehension along with detailed illustrations of how this text comprehension model is at work in the CCSS.

Since most teachers are often quite accomplished readers themselves and comprehend texts well and automatically, it is difficult for them to think deeply about the comprehension demands that complex or difficult texts place upon younger, less experienced readers. In order to become aware of these processes and the demands placed on younger readers, teachers need to become more consciously aware of and apply knowledge of text comprehension theories and models to their comprehension instruction. As teachers are able to do this, they are also able to select more appropriately challenging complex texts, CCS reading standards, effective self-regulating, cognitive comprehension strategies and are able to guide rich discussions of texts to mitigate obstacles to their students' text comprehension.

Elementary teachers are the key to the success of their younger students' acquisition of formative comprehension processes. Unfortunately, most teacher preparation programs, school district professional development workshops, and even federally sponsored teacher practice guides have emphasized the *what* and *how* of teaching reading comprehension skills and strategies but they have not focused on increasing teachers' knowledge and understanding of models and explanations of text comprehension processes and how this knowledge can inform the content and structure that comprehension instruction will eventually

take. Without adequate understanding of text comprehension models and processes, teachers often rely upon an alchemized mix of teaching one or more comprehension strategies coupled with text discussions to bequeath students with effective and efficient text comprehension processes.

Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman (2011, p. 82) observed that, "We need to understand far better how great teachers of comprehension became great and how to help many more teachers become so. We need…research that examines the knowledge teachers need to engage in specific practices supportive of comprehension…" Kucan, Hapgood, and Palincsar (2011) examined the knowledge intermediate grade teachers had for engaging in specific practices supportive of reading comprehension instruction. These researchers asked 60 upper grade teachers to respond to a paper and pencil test called the *Comprehension and Learning from Text Survey* (CoLTS). This test engaged teachers in analyzing a text for the most important ideas as well as those text features that might challenge a reader's comprehension. Specifically, teachers were first asked to analyze their students' responses to questions and comments about a text. Next, teachers were asked about their understandings of specific discourse moves that might be designed to engage students in making sense of these ideas in text. After analyzing the data obtained from the administration of the CoLTS to this group of upper grade teachers, the researchers concluded the following:

> *"We found the majority of teachers (85%) in this study demonstrated very limited ability to analyze the CoLTS [science] texts in meaningful ways. We connect this lack of expertise to a larger construct, namely, that the teachers were not working from a model of text comprehension that foregrounds the integration of text information and the possible obstacles to that integration [emphasis added]. Specifically, the majority of teachers did not refer to text coherence or to identifiable factors that might impede a reader in building a coherent representation of text ideas. Instead, many teachers treated text ideas as equally important, failing to identify the most critical information in the text and directing students to do the same (p. 76)."*

In yet another study of primary grade teachers' knowledge of informational text structures, Reutzel, Jones, Clark & Kumar (in press) stated the following:

> *"Teacher education programs will need to increase attention to training inservice and preservice teachers in text analysis skills (Shanahan, 2013). Our experiences as teacher educators suggest that this is an area where*

considerable new attention needs to be focused in preparing teachers to teach the CCSS effectively and to assist them in developing the insights and skills necessary to determine the appropriate text complexity-reader match for providing effective comprehension instruction teaching with informational texts (Duke, Halliday & Roberts, 2013).

The results of these recent research studies strongly suggest that without knowledge of text comprehension models and processes to foreground instructional decision-making, elementary teachers will likely struggle to provide effective comprehension instruction that anticipates text-based comprehension obstacles. Without an ability to determine text-based comprehension obstacles, teachers will also likely have difficulty selecting appropriate texts to support comprehension strategy instruction and meaningful discussions of text dependent evidence, especially in informational texts. As a result, elementary teachers may teach CCS reading standards in ways that fail to support the underlying text comprehension processes their students need to learn. Similarly, they may also be at a loss as to how to diagnose and intervene with struggling students who need additional support to comprehend the texts they are assigned to read.

Many years ago, Kurt Lewin, father of modern day social psychology said, "There is nothing so practical as a good theory." If models and/or theories of text comprehension processes actually explain how readers comprehend text, then it stands to reason that teachers would be well served to acquire and use this knowledge when selecting which CCS reading standards to teach, which texts to select for use in instruction, and which combination of comprehension strategies are to be taught, as well as how to effectively guide student discussions to support development of efficient and effective text comprehension processes.

In this presentation, I advanced the argument that teachers who understand the cognitive processes underlying text comprehension and then assist students in this process are well served as they select CCS standards and plan effective comprehension instruction. As such, I argued that knowledge of text comprehension theories, models and processes constitutes a very rich and potentially profitable starting point for teachers. In order to appropriately select CCS reading standards to teach and plan effective comprehension instruction, teachers will need to be guided by this knowledge of text comprehension processes to analyze complex texts for potential comprehension obstacles. Knowledge of text comprehension models and theories are also useful for informing elementary teachers about how to intervene with struggling students to comprehend the increasingly complex texts required in a *Common Core Standards* instructional era (Kendeou, van den Broek, & White, 2007; Kucan, Hapgood, & Palincsar, 2011; Shanahan, et al., 2010).

In my presentation, I explained, how a long-standing comprehension model – *Schema Theory* – has dominated most teachers' conceptualizations of comprehension instruction for over three decades. Next I discussed how another model of text comprehension, Kintsch's (2013) updated *Construction-Integration Model of Text Comprehension,* is more appropriately linked to the content, form, and structure of the CCSS reading anchor standard cluster headings.

Following this, I provided a brief overview of how the CI model of text comprehension links to the three cluster headings of *Common Core's* reading literature and informational text anchor standards. Following this explanation, I illustrated how theoretical knowledge of the CI model of text comprehension could be used to inform primary grade teachers' use of the CCS's three anchor reading standards and inform the planning and implementation of effective comprehension instruction.

Antecedent Comprehension Instruction of the Common Core State Reading Standards: Schema Theory

Schema Theory, when it was first introduced, was a significant shift away from the previous practices of instructing discrete reading comprehension skills one at a time (Anderson & Pearson, 1981). Schema Theory highlighted the importance of the reader's background knowledge as central to the process of comprehending text. Schemas or schemata are often described as "a cognitive collection" of related knowledge and experiences stored in a reader's long-term memory. When reading a text, schemas are used to help students comprehend texts more effortlessly. Research on Schema Theory has repeatedly demonstrated that when students bring copious amounts of background knowledge about language, text and the world to the process of comprehending a text, they have a much easier time making sense of it (Pressley, 2001). Teachers who ground their instruction in Schema Theory are likely to plan significant up front scaffolds intended to call forth or activate their students' background knowledge for the topic or theme of the text to be read. For example, if the students were reading the *Tale of Peter Rabbit* by B. Potter (1902), a schema theory informed teacher would plan to activate students' background experiences about the theme of the story, *disobedience*, rather than focusing instruction on the text and how to build or elaborate related schemas by using text-based information to construct a mental representation of the meaning of the text.

Discussions around text, when informed by Schema Theory have also often focused on responding to or assessing the constellation of ideas students bring to the text from their background knowledge rather than focusing

predominantly on constructing an accurate representation of ideas described in the text. In short, the context and emphasis that has characterized schema-driven comprehension instruction in elementary classrooms has focused chiefly on activating, building, elaborating, or modifying students' background knowledge in preparation for reading a text. Frontloading students' background knowledge with generous servings of text-based knowledge by the teacher has led to an unanticipated consequence – students who have under-developed, independent text-based information processing abilities or who extract from text an evidentiary base to construct or elaborate upon related schemata. In short, such frontloading of text-based information has led to the undesirable condition of creating teacher dependent students who do not have the skills or dispositions to engage in the hard work of extracting from text evidence necessary to support comprehension without teacher assistance. According to Pearson (2013), "As a profession we have overindulged at the trough of prior knowledge, [but] the remedy is to balance its role, not eliminate it."

With the adoption of the *Common Core State English Language Arts* standards (NGA & CCSSO, 2010), the text and text-based comprehension processes, rather than the reader's schema activation or development, have been positioned at the focal point of classroom comprehension instruction. With this change, teachers and students need to view the text as a rich evidentiary base to be excavated carefully for nuggets of information that can be used to create a schema or elaborate readers' existing schemas.

Teaching Comprehension with the Common Core State Reading Standards: The Construction Integration [CI] Model of Text Comprehension

As I closely examined three classes of text comprehension models described by A. Graesser (2007), I found that Kintsch's updated (2013) *Construction-Integration (CI) Model of Text Comprehension* provided the single best fitting and most comprehensive explanation of text comprehension processes in connection with the Common Core State reading standards. The components of the CI model map well onto the content and sequence of the three reading anchor standard clusters - *key ideas and details, author's craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas* - found in the literature and informational text (reading) *Common Core State Standards* (NGA & CCSSO, 2010).

Recent updates to the CI model have focused on how readers comprehend longer units of text as well as describing how readers comprehend different

text genres, how reader goals influence text processing, etc., similar to other comprehension models (Graesser, 2007; Van den Broek, et al., 2002). Kintsch and Kintsch (2005) contend that knowing the goal state achieved by adult, fluent readers when efficiently and effectively comprehending text is a useful starting point for informing instruction that can transform beginning readers into fluent, adult comprehenders. They claim it is precisely by understanding the striking contrast between novice readers' reading comprehension processes and those of fluent, adult readers that teachers and curriculum designers can better conceptualize comprehension instruction that can span a wide developmental period (Kintsch & Kintsch, 2005). The *Construction-Integration (CI) Model of Text Comprehension* is composed of two major comprehension components – *construction* and *integration.* To begin, we describe the *construction* component of the *CI Model of Text Comprehension.*

The CI model of text comprehension suggests that readers initially construct a mental representation of the ideas in a text called a *microstructure.* Constructing a microstructure establishes a coherent mental model of the ideas or propositions represented at the local level of text. Thus, the initial focus of a proficient reader is to construct a text base of what the text actually says. To do this, readers must carefully attend to the key ideas and supporting details represented in the text. In addition, proficient readers must also often impose a coherent representation on the relationships between and among ideas in text to be able to distinguish key ideas from supporting details.

I believe it is anything but coincidental, that the first cluster of *Common Core* reading (K-3) anchor standards focuses on developing young readers' abilities to determine *key ideas and details* in text. Determining the key ideas and details in text maps directly onto the CI model's first level of text processing – constructing a *microstructure.* Thus under the new CCS reading anchor standards, it is important for all readers to learn to consciously attend to the construction of an accurate and coherent microstructure of the text since later comprehension processes, namely constructing the macrostructure, text base and integrating background knowledge with text-based information to create a satisfactory situation model in the CI text comprehension model, should be and is necessarily constrained by the text information at this first level of processing – *microstructure.* If readers fail to develop the ability to construct an accurate and coherent microstructure representation of the ideas (proposition) in text, they will be unable to successfully progress to deeper levels of comprehension processing. Predictably, students who fail to successfully construct the microstructure of text will often over rely on background knowledge to create their eventual situation model of the text.

The CI model describes a second level of text processing – constructing *macrostructure*. Constructing macrostructure focuses on identifying or imposing hierarchical relationships on a growing set of ideas represented in the *microstructure* of text. The focus of the reader at this second level of construction is to identify the author's craft and organization in composing the text and/or to consciously impose such a structure at the discourse or text level on the ideas represented in the microstructure.

Again, we believe it is anything but coincidental, that the second cluster of *Common Core* reading (K-3) anchor reading standards focus on developing young readers' abilities to use *author's craft and structure* in text. Determining an author's craft and/or structure in text maps closely onto the CI model's second level of text processing – constructing a *macrostructure*. A macrostructure, such as - *setting, problem, and resolution in narrative texts* –is the way in which stories are often crafted and arranged to form a globally coherent representation of ideas at the discourse level. On the other hand, information texts may be crafted and arranged using various text structures such *compare/contrast, sequence/procedure, problem/solution*, etc., to form a globally coherent macrostructure at the discourse level of text. To construct a macrostructure of text, young readers must carefully attend to author provided cues such as text features, text structure signal words, and literary devices such as flashbacks, foreshadowing, or use of signal words, etc., to determine the structure of the text at a global or discourse level. If readers cannot determine the author's intended *macrostructure* for comprehension processing to proceed, they will need to impose a globally coherent text structure or macrostructure on the text.

The CI model describes a third level of text processing for comprehension – *integration*. Integration processes are used to form a *situation model* of the text. The focus of the reader at this third level of text processing is to consciously and actively integrate the contents of the constructed text-based information with their background knowledge to create a *situation* model or mental interpretation of what is going on in the text – what the text means.

With the close match between the three levels of text comprehension represented in the CI Model and the third cluster of CCS reading anchor standards – *integration of knowledge and ideas*, the link between the three clusters of *Common Core* reading anchor standards and the three levels of Kintsch's CI model of text comprehension is much more than coincidental! Integration of text-based information with schema-based information in a reader's background knowledge results in what Kintsch (2013) calls a *situation model*. A situation model is created from much more than what the reader constructed in the text-base from the text

information. It is, rather, a product of combining background knowledge with text-based information to make an inference about what the text means or an interpretation of what the situation is in the text.

A satisfactorily created situation model conforms to two constraints: 1) it is consistent with the ideas represented in the text base; and 2) it corresponds with the way the reader views the world through his/her lens of background knowledge. The creation of a *situation model* is often what many classroom teachers are most interested in when they assess students' comprehension of text. Finally, proficient readers actively integrate the contents the situation model into their world knowledge network to acquire new knowledge. When this text comprehension process happens, as it should, a virtuous comprehension cycle as described by Duke, et al. (2011) functions, as it should where *knowledge begets comprehension and comprehension begets knowledge*!

CCSS Comprehension Instruction Foregrounded by the CI Model of Text Comprehension

Comprehension instruction informed by the *CI Model of Text Comprehension* substantially shifts the ways that teachers implement comprehension instruction in a *Common Core Standards* era. In Figure 1, I display how an instructional framework informed by the CI Model informed requires multiple levels of text comprehension processing.

Construction Integration Model of Text Comprehension	*CCS Reading Standards*	*Instructional Decision Making (Evidence-Based Practices)*
Construction	**CCS State Reading Anchor Cluster**	**Size of Text Unit Focus**
Microstructure	Key Ideas & Details	(Words, Phrases, Sentences)
↓ →	Individual Reading Anchor Standards	Comprehension Strategy Set: Select Multiple Strategies
	4	Vocabulary Learning Strategies
		• Tier 2 & 3 words
	3, 5	Establishing Local Text Coherence Strategies

		• Cohesion Terms • Vertical Structuring of Phrases and Sentences • Sentence Combing • Paraphrasing
	1-5	Cognitive Strategies
		• Graphic Organizers • Monitoring • Fix Ups
	1, 2	Discussion/Interaction Strategies
		• Questioning • Retelling • Dramatization
	1-5	Background Knowledge
		• Active • Build • Modify
Construction	**CCS State Reading Anchor Cluster**	Size of Text Unit Focus
Microstructure	Craft and Structure	(Paragraphs, Sections, Chapters, Whole Texts)
↓ →	5, 6	Establishing Global Text Coherence Strategies
		• Literacy Devices • Text Features • Text Structure
	5, 6	Cognitive Strategies
		• Text Structure • Graphic Organizer • Summarization • Monitoring • Fix Ups
	5, 6	Discussion/Interaction Strategies
↓ →		• Close Reading • Elaborative Interrogation • Questioning the Author
	5, 6	Background Knowledge
		• Activate • Build • Modify

Integration	**CCS State Reading Anchor Cluster**	Size of Text Unit Focus
Situation Model of Text	*Integration of Knowledge & Ideas*	*(Whole Text)*
⟶	Individual Reading Standards Selection	
	7-8	• Close Reading • Questioning • Retelling
Integration—Linking the Situation Model with World Knowledge		*Size of Text Unit Focus (Multiple Texts)*
	9	Cognitive Strategies • Graphic Organizers • Text Structure • Summarization • Presentation/Reports • Visual Imagery/ Illustrations

Figure 1. CI model-based CCS comprehension instructional framework

This CI model-based instructional framework shows how multiple levels of text comprehension processing link to the three clusters of CCS reading anchor standards. In the first column, I list levels of text comprehension processing represented in the CI Model. In the second column, I list the three clusters of CCS reading anchor standards with their numbers that link to the levels of text comprehension processing in the CI Model. In the third column, I list potentially useful comprehension strategies that might be selected as part of a set of strategies to be taught to support teaching the reading anchor standards within each of the three CCS reading standard cluster levels. To understand how to use this CI model-based instructional framework, I describe each of the major components in Figure 1.

Begin by Selecting an Appropriately Challenging Text.   In most core reading programs, publishers select texts for teachers. When this is not the case, the opportunity to select appropriately challenging, engaging, and supportive texts for planning effective comprehension instruction falls to the teacher. When

selecting a text to support effective reading comprehension instruction, teachers should consider at least three important indicators:

1. The quantitative level of text difficulty
2. The qualitative obstacles at multiple levels of comprehension
3. The match between reader and text

Teachers often begin this process by examining texts for grade level difficulty using indicators such as Lexiles. It is important to select texts that are within the Lexile level "stretch" bandwidth suggested by the CCS to get at that level of challenge that is just right (See https://www.lexile.com/using-lexile/lexile-measures-and-the-ccssi/text-complexity-grade-bands-and-lexile-ranges/).

Teachers should also consider the genre of text to be selected. If the previous text read by students was a narrative, then the next text should be selected from the informational text genre to maintain the CCS suggested proportion of 50/50 literature to informational texts. Interest in the theme or topic of a text is also important.

Next, teachers would do well to carefully read the text to determine qualitative aspects of the text that may prove to be challenging for students. These qualitative aspects may include but are not limited to failure to include or use connecting and signal words; include text features such as headings, illustrations, photos, or a glossary; or follow a clearly identifiable text structure. Texts that require students to infer from or impose these qualitative aspects on a text are more challenging than those texts in which authors provide these. As Shanahan (2014, p. 15) reminds us, teachers should remember that "the point [of text selection] shouldn't be to place students in books easy enough to ensure good reading, but to provide enough scaffolding to allow them to read harder books successfully."

CI Model-Based Comprehension Instruction Planning.   Comprehension instruction informed by a CI Model would arrange the three clusters of CCS reading anchor standards into an ascending sequence from low to high levels of comprehension processes as described in the CI model. Thus, the first cluster of reading anchor standards would be *key ideas and details*. Rather than selecting a single reading standard to support text comprehension instruction as in the past, teachers who possess theoretical knowledge of the CI model might select individual reading anchor standards (1-3) from within each of the three clusters of reading anchor standards representing the CI Model's three levels of reading comprehension processing: Cluster 1, individual reading anchor

standards (1-3); Cluster 2, individual reading anchor standards (4-6); Cluster 3, individual reading anchor standards (7-9).

To begin, teachers select an individual reading anchor standard (2) within Cluster 1, *key ideas and details* to support the first level of CI model-based text comprehension processing - *constructing microstructure.*

> 2.   Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.

Next, teachers select another individual reading anchor standard (5) from those listed within Cluster 2, *craft and structure* that supports the second level of CI model-based text processing, *constructing macrostructure.* This standard may be addressed during a second close reading of the text to determine how the author has used text features to signal text genre and text structure.

> 5.   Know and use various text features (e.g., headings, tables of contents, glossaries, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text.

Finally, teachers select individual reading anchor standard (7) within the third cluster of reading anchor standards, *integration of knowledge and ideas,* to support the third level of CI model-based text processing, *forming a situation model of the text.*

> 7.   Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas.

Integrating information represented in the illustrations, the text base, and the reader's background knowledge through focused discussion helps young students to form a coherent situation model of the text.

I concluded my presentation by arguing that the linkages between the three current CCS reading anchor standard clusters – 1) key ideas and details; 2) author's craft and structure; and 3) integration of knowledge and ideas and the three levels of text comprehension processing described in Kintsch's (2013) updated model of text comprehension processes forms an ideal set of reading standards ideally fitted to the most widely acclaimed and most comprehensive model of text-based comprehension available to date. I argued that theoretically grounded and standards-based reading comprehension instruction would be more likely to promote increased quality of teacher designed comprehension instruction as well as improved comprehension outcomes for young readers. Without a theoretical grounding, I argued that the CCS reading anchor standards represent little more than a new listing of desired outcomes that teachers

can randomly select and teach to the end that elementary-aged students will miraculously construct a coherent of text-based comprehension on their own.

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ALER Research Awards

Comparing Core Reading Programs and the Communicative Approach to Build Vocabulary Skills of English Learners

Dissertation Winner

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Abstract

This study explored the effect of implementing techniques situated in aspects of the communicative approach to language learning when teaching vocabulary from a core reading program to English learners. Participants were 73 fifth-grade English learners in classrooms of 11 teachers who were randomly assigned to the treatment or comparison group. The teachers of the treatment group implemented an intervention designed to teach vocabulary using methods recommended in the research with the potential to increase vocabulary acquisition of English learners while the comparison group received instruction based on the Core Reading Program. Linear regression analysis revealed a significant difference in growth of vocabulary skills from pretest to posttest between treatment and comparison groups (p = .001); students in the treatment group showed greater growth than comparison students. This study confirmed the effectiveness of implementing purposeful, strategic communicative techniques for successful vocabulary acquisition for English learners.

As the number of English learners (ELs) in U.S. schools increases, data from standardized testing show this subgroup to be the farthest behind in reading achievement (Fry, 2007); National Assessment of Educational Progress results indicated 29% of ELs scored at basic or above level in reading (NAEP, 2009). Children who score lowest on high-stakes assessments often lack sufficient vocabulary knowledge (McGill-Franzen, Zmach, Solic, & Zeig, 2006). Given the importance of proficient reading skills, it is critical to address literacy and vocabulary instructional needs of ELs (Yoon, 2007).

Core Reading Programs (CRP) have been used in the United States since the early 1900s and continue to be a driving force in reading instruction (Brenner & Hiebert, 2010) with estimates that CRPs are used in over 73% of U.S. elementary classrooms (DeWitz et al., 2009). However, it is rare to find a CRP that includes adequate guidelines (Gersten, Baker, Shanahan, Linan-Thompson, Collins, & Scarcella, 2007) with necessary frequency and rigor (Walsh, 2003) for vocabulary instruction for ELs. Analyses of the most popular CRPs found that none offered sufficient recommendations for vocabulary instruction to increase comprehension (Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, & Watts-Taffe, 2006; Flynt & Brozo, 2008; McGill-Franzen et al., 2006).

Vocabulary development is strongly related to academic achievement (Biemiller, 2005; Hart & Risley, 2003). Research has shown students who reach fourth grade with limited vocabularies are likely to struggle to understand grade-level texts (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). One population particularly likely to lack English vocabulary is the growing number of ELs (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007) who are trying to not only acquire basic language, but also vocabulary of academic content (Blachowicz, et al., 2006) and the general discourse of school (Graves, 2006; McKay & Low, 2012). These factors contribute to the achievement gap often found between native English speakers and ELs (NAEP, 2009), thus substantiating the importance of vocabulary instruction for ELs.

English learners face many challenges in classrooms across the United States. Language demands of instruction are often invisible to mainstream teachers; the role of language in teaching and learning academic content is assumed rather than made explicit (Harper & de Jong, 2004). There are few resources for teachers to reference for information on teaching vocabulary to ELs (August & Shanahan, 2006; Graves, 2006; Lesaux & Geva, 2006). Teachers apply misconceptions as they grapple with these difficulties (Cooper, Chard, & Kiger, 2006; Foorman, 2007), creating daily challenges for ELs in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study sought to investigate the effectiveness of using purposeful and strategic instructional techniques situated in aspects of the communicative approach to language learning (Ballman, et al. 2001) to teach vocabulary for fifth-grade ELs from CRPs.

Questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. Is there a difference in *overall* vocabulary acquisition between ELs in a treatment group incorporating purposeful, strategic communicative techniques and tasks with explicit teacher explanation of new vocabulary into vocabulary instruction from a core reading program and those in a standard instruction comparison group?

2. Is there a difference in *short-term (weekly)* vocabulary acquisition between ELs in a treatment group incorporating purposeful, strategic communicative techniques and tasks with explicit teacher explanations of new vocabulary into vocabulary instruction form a core reading program and those in a standard instruction comparison group?

Methods

Setting

This study was conducted in an inner-city school district, where, at the time, approximately 53% of the student population's heritage language was not English with over 95% of that population speaking Spanish. Just over 30% were classified as Limited English Proficient. The district was economically impacted with 75% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, a 40% mobility rate, and the highest migrant population percentage in the state (personal communication, August 10, 2010). This district qualified for Title I funds based on a high percentage of students in poverty, according to census poverty estimates.

Participants

Participants were fifth-grade students from 11 classrooms in five schools. The 11 participating teachers were randomly assigned to treatment or comparison group, resulting in six classrooms in the treatment group with 47 total students and five classrooms in the comparison group with 26 total students. There was

an average of 26 students in each classroom with an average of seven ELs per classroom (range 4-13 per class). Analyses were completed to determine comparability between treatment and comparison groups at the beginning of the study. A chi-square analysis showed no relationship between gender and treatment condition: $\chi2$ (1, $n = 73$) = 0.983, $p = .321$. An independent t test showed no significant difference between groups on DIBELS oral reading fluency (DORF) ($t = -1.176$, $df = 71$, $p = .244$, two-tailed), treatment group mean of 73.85, SD = 22.12 and comparison group mean of 67.27, SD = 24.28.

Description of Intervention

This study was conducted in schools that used the CRP "*Reading Street*" by Scott Foresman Publishers (Afflerbach et al., 2011). Use of vocabulary words from the CRP increased authenticity of vocabulary word selection and facilitated ease when comparing differences between treatment and comparison groups. Teachers used the CRP systematically, starting at the beginning and going through each selection in the order they were presented. Nine selections from the CRP from which weekly quizzes were scored were completed by all study classes but one.

Treatment group instruction. The teachers of the treatment group classrooms were provided a vocabulary instruction intervention designed by the researcher based on a five-day schedule that emphasized vocabulary-based communicative student tasks (Table 1), compatible with the five-day schedule for vocabulary instruction in the CRP. The intervention was planned to take 20-30 minutes of instructional time. Several techniques used in the intervention incorporated recommendations found in review of the literature. They were implemented within the context of social learning and the delivery method found in the communicative approach.

The communicative approach. Research in second-language acquisition indicates that social interaction is an important part of learning a language, as posited in Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social learning. Students must be able to interact with others to develop language (Cambourne, 2002; Trueba, 2001). The communicative approach to language acquisition became popular in the 1970s as a response to programs that emphasized rote learning or were grammar or literature specific, resulting in lack of achievement in communicative competence in the target language (Larsen-Freeman, 2007). The goal of the communicative approach is for students to learn the language for the purpose of communicating with others through authentic uses of interaction and discussion (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2007). The communicative approach to language learning places emphasis on creating situations in

the classroom that encourage interaction and activities that facilitate authentic and meaningful use of language, and provides a medium that extends discourse and oral communication. The communicative approach provides a framework in which recommendations for effective instructional strategies may be implemented. Some principles evident in the communicative approach as outlined by Larsen-Freeman (2007) include the following:

- Authentic language is used in real contexts. The social context is essential.

- The target language is not the object of study, but is the means by which classroom communication occurs.

- Students work with language at the discourse level.

- Games are included to create authentic communicative events in which there is purpose to the exchange and the speakers receive immediate feedback as to whether or not communication has been successful.

- Small group work maximizes the amount of communicative practice.

- Students are given the opportunity to express their ideas and can choose what to say and how to say it.

The techniques used in the intervention are briefly discussed below.

TABLE 1
Weekly Schedule for Vocabulary Intervention

Day	Schedule for the day
1	Weekly pre-quiz administered by teacher.
	Explicit description, explanation, or example of each word with a non-linguistic representation provided by teacher.
	Students restate and write the description in their own words in the composition notebook.
2	Word association activity: Students relate the word to a word or phrase they are familiar with and associate the word with their own cultures and backgrounds.
	Word analysis template completed as a whole group.
	Students create a picture, symbol, or graphic to illustrate the vocabulary word.
3 & 4	Peer-mediated task-based activities: Students complete a vocabulary graphic organizer for each vocabulary word, working in partners. One partner is the reporter, the other is the recorder. These roles alternate between the partners.
5	Review games: Two PowerPoint template games, Jeopardy and $100,000 Pyramid.
	Weekly post-quiz administered.

Explicit teacher explanations of vocabulary.   A major emphasis was the use of explicit explanations when teachers provided meanings of new vocabulary words using clear descriptions and nonlinguistic representations. Students were guided to use these explanations to create their own descriptions of vocabulary words.

Word association.   Teachers helped students make word associations between new vocabulary words and familiar concepts. Students contributed to discussion by relating ideas from their own backgrounds. Word associations helped students review words and prepare to construct their own nonlinguistic representations.

Peer-mediated activities.   Students worked in peer-mediated activities on three days of the intervention. On days three and four, they worked with partners to complete graphic organizers in a Vocabulary Book provided by the researcher. Each student had only enough graphic organizers in their Vocabulary Book for half the words in a selection, so for completion of all words collaboration was required. Peer-mediated communication occurred as one partner (reporter) instructed the other partner (recorder) what to place in each section of the graphic organizer. On the last day, they worked with partners or teams during the review game.

Graphic organizers.   The graphic organizer used in this intervention provided various collaborative activities for students to practice words. Framing collaboration as necessary to complete the graphic organizer created an authentic situation in which interaction was required to complete tasks as indicated in the communicative approach. Several purposes were accomplished with the graphic organizer; students used their own descriptions and nonlinguistic representations, and it provided rigorous practice by requiring an example and non-example for each word (Figure 1).

Word:			
description		picture	
example		non-example	
word	*prefix*	*base word*	*suffix*

Figure 1. Graphic Organizer for Use with Vocabulary Task-based Activity

Nonlinguistic representations.   Both teachers and students used nonlinguistic representations. The teachers used them when they introduced vocabulary, and the students created them for each vocabulary term and during completion of the partner graphic organizer. The graphic organizer had two additional sections (example and non-example of the word) in which partners chose to use words or nonlinguistic representations.

Examples/non-examples.   Partners recorded an example and non-example of the word in the graphic organizer. This provided an opportunity for students to use deeper thought, analysis, and discussion of each vocabulary term.

Word analysis.   Word analysis occurred two times during the intervention cycle. The goal was to help students understand meanings of words by looking at prefixes or suffixes that may affect the meaning of a base word. Teachers and students completed a chart during a whole-class activity in which they broke words into word parts, identifying affixes and base words. Students completed the same task during partner work on the graphic organizer.

Games.   Two PowerPoint review games from templates based on Jeopardy and $100,000 Pyramid games were played interchangeably the last day of each weekly instructional cycle. Students worked in pairs in the Pyramid game and in teams of three or four in the Jeopardy game.

Notebooks.   Two notebooks were used during the treatment: a blank composition notebook in which students wrote their own word explanations and created nonlinguistic representations, and a notebook created by the researcher containing the template for the word analysis activity and the graphic organizer completed with partners.

Comparison group instruction.   The comparison group used vocabulary lessons from the CRP. Following standard practice, teachers were free to determine how to implement various recommendations for vocabulary instruction from the CRP and had the option of using supplemental materials at their discretion. Some CRPs had a passage, which contained the vocabulary words bolded in the text, and students were to use context clues to determine meanings of words. Most used worksheets which included tasks such as fill in the blank, match the word with its antonym or a given clue for the word, or use the word in a sentence. Teacher-led activities in the CRP usually included questions to help students establish background knowledge for the word after students silently read the short passage with the vocabulary words or the teacher read the passage to the students. Comparison group teachers were not made aware of any part of the vocabulary intervention being implemented by treatment teachers.

Instructional Materials

Minimal preparation or time was required of teachers; all materials were supplied for them. Teachers in comparison and treatment groups were provided mastery tests and weekly quizzes for every student. Comparison group teachers had access to the CRP and were expected to use those materials for vocabulary instruction as they deemed appropriate. Treatment teachers were given a flash drive containing descriptions of tested vocabulary words and associated pictures to project onto a screen during explicit explanations, and two PowerPoint template games used during weekly reviews. Students were provided two notebooks.

Fidelity of Implementation

To gauge the degree instructional procedures were delivered as planned, components of fidelity of implementation were included in the study:

- observations of classrooms
- information from teacher logs recording weekly vocabulary instruction
- measurement of the two student notebooks

Fidelity of implementation information showed adherence to components of the treatment, lending credence to the conclusion found through statistical analyses of a significant difference on gain scores between treatment and comparison teachers on the mastery test and weekly quizzes.

Measures

Measures were two multiple-choice questions assessments: assessment for weekly selections and the mastery test. Questions were taken directly from the assessment handbook of the CRP. They consisted of four options from which to choose the correct meaning of the vocabulary word underlined in the sentence.

Mastery Test

The purpose of the mastery test was to determine retention of vocabulary words taught during the study. It was hypothesized that the increased number of interactions and deeper learning of words would result in long-term acquisition rather than surface level knowledge that were not internalized. The mastery test consisted of 28 multiple-choice questions drawn from vocabulary assessments from the first 15 reading selections in the CRP and was administered at the beginning of the study

to provide a baseline of vocabulary knowledge of the words and at the conclusion of the study to evaluate overall growth and retention of tested vocabulary words.

Weekly Selection Quizzes

The purpose of weekly quizzes was to measure acquisition of vocabulary words taught weekly using instruction from the intervention. Weekly quizzes were taken directly from the CRP assessment materials. The CRP did not include a pretest quiz before the weekly cycle, but for the study, all teachers gave the quiz as a pretest the first day of the weekly cycle and as a posttest at the end of the cycle. The number of words on each quiz varied from five to seven words and took approximately five minutes to complete.

Findings

Analysis of data was collected from 73 fifth-grade ELs on two measures: (a) overall gain on a mastery test administered at the beginning and end of the study; (b) gain on weekly quizzes given before and after weekly reading instruction. As pretests and posttests (Level 1) were nested within students (Level 2), and students nested within teachers' instructional groups (Level 3), analysis included a cluster variable to account for teacher grouping.

Descriptive Statistics for Measures

Mastery test. The mastery test had a possible range of scores from 0 to 28. Means were calculated for pretest ($M = 10.96$, $SD = 2.91$) and posttest ($M = 16.70$, $SD = 4.35$). The average gain between pretest and posttest was 5.68 points. There was not a significant difference between means of the treatment ($M = 10.77$. $SD = 2.56$) and comparison group ($M = 11.31$, $SD = 3.47$) on the mastery pretest with a difference of .54 points favoring the comparison group.

On the mastery posttest, the treatment group scored higher ($M = 18.28$, $SD = 4.02$) than the comparison group ($M = 13.85$, $SD = 3.414$) with a difference of 4.43 points. Students in the treatment group showed higher average scores on overall mastery gain ($M = 7.43$, $SD = 3.62$) than the comparison group ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 3.09$) with a difference of 4.89 points. An independent t-test showed the difference between the groups at posttest was significant, $t(71) = 5.813$, $p < .001$.

Linear regression was conducted using MPlus Version 5 (Muthén & Muthén, 2007) to examine potential differences in vocabulary acquisition by group assignment for the overall mastery test. Analysis included a cluster variable to account for teacher grouping. The linear model for the mastery test regressed student posttest scores on pretest scores by group assignment. A chi-square test

of model fit for the baseline model was significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 73) = 40.643$, $p < 0.001$. The model indicated the group assignment variable was significant, $t(71) = 9.406$, $p < 0.001$. Group assignment accounted for 36% of the variance in comparing treatment group to comparison group, indicating a significant difference in growth of vocabulary acquisition from pretest to posttest.

Weekly quizzes. Analysis of weekly vocabulary growth focused on weekly gain scores for each selection taught in treatment and comparison classes. Gain scores were determined by calculating the average difference in words correct between each weekly pretest and posttest quiz. Gain scores analyzed for normality indicated scores were normally distributed.

Measures of central tendency were computed on gain scores for each of the nine selections. The mean gain score on weekly quizzes was 1.69, $SD = .94$. Gain scores ranged from -.80 to 4.00. The average gain score for the treatment group ($M = 1.98$, $SD = .88$) was higher than the average gain score for the comparison group ($M = 1.15$, $SD = .80$). An independent t-test showed the difference between the groups was significant, $t(71) = 4.03$, $p < .001$.

Linear regression was conducted to examine potential differences in vocabulary acquisition by group assignment for weekly quizzes. Analysis included a cluster variable to account for teacher grouping. The linear model for weekly quiz gains regressed student average weekly posttest scores on average weekly pretest scores by group assignment. A chi-square test of model fit was significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 73) = 181.10$, $p < 0.001$. The group assignment variable was significant, $t(71) = 4.030$, $p < 0.001$. Students in the treatment group showed greater growth than students in the comparison group with group assignment accounting for 15% of the variance between treatment and comparison group.

Discussion of Findings and Conclusions
Vocabulary Acquisition

Results of the linear regression confirmed initial expectations of the study for both overall and short-term vocabulary acquisition. There was a difference between overall vocabulary acquisition for ELs on a mastery test for treatment and comparison groups. Students in the treatment group ($M = 18.28$, $SD = 4.02$) demonstrated increased growth over students in the comparison group ($M = 13.85$, $SD = 3.41$). ELs taught vocabulary with this treatment showed higher gain scores on weekly quizzes ($M = 1.98$, $SD = .88$) than ELs receiving standard instruction ($M = 1.15$, $SD = .80$). This study revealed that a vocabulary instructional treatment that included communicative techniques and tasks produced higher vocabulary gains than for students receiving standard vocabulary instruction from the CRP.

Discussion of Treatment Group Instruction

The intervention supported the premises present in the district-adopted CRP. The resource section discussed essential components for ELs to be successful in this CRP. The following concepts that were integrated in this five-day intervention were discussed:

- nonlinguistic representations
- connections with students' prior knowledge and background
- graphic organizers and templates to facilitate language production
- word analysis to determine meanings of words, incorporating affixes and roots
- vocabulary notebooks
- interaction between students with differing levels of language proficiency
- weekly reviews and assessments.

The intervention used these components exclusively in the realm of vocabulary instruction, whereas the reading program used these at different times throughout the entire language arts block time. The treatment included these components as several structured communicative peer-mediated activities. The communicative activity was collaborative completion of the graphic organizer. This led to discussion, contributing to vocabulary development and content knowledge, and requiring negotiation of meaning. Providing tasks to accomplish as partners ensures longer continued oral interaction and contributes to language development. Partner roles, combined with tasks on the graphic organizer, led to deeper conservations and engagement with vocabulary words.

Similarities in Treatment and Comparison Group Instruction

During researcher observations of classroom instruction and analysis of teacher logs, it was noted that comparison group teachers used, to varying degrees, components included in the treatment. These included strategies, such as partner interaction, graphic organizers, nonlinguistic representations, notebooks, and review activities.

- *Partner Interaction*: There was a difference between types of interaction in the groups. The treatment required structure with the "reporter" and "recorder" roles. The majority of interactions in

comparison classrooms were unstructured, occurring when teachers asked students to respond to a partner about a particular question, similar to the "think pair share" strategy.

- *Graphic Organizer*: Graphic organizers were used inconsistently and independently in comparison classrooms in contrast to treatment group students completing the graphic organizer regularly and collaboratively.

- *Nonlinguistic Representations:* Use of nonlinguistic representations in the treatment was to provide comprehensible input and reinforce understanding during explicit explanation of words. Conversely, when nonlinguistic representations were posted for comparison groups, they were generally used only as a reference rather than to introduce and explain meanings of vocabulary words.

- *Notebooks*: There did not appear to be any student interaction or practice with vocabulary terms in notebooks used in the comparison group.

- *Review Activities*: Review games were an integral part of the treatment instruction. Some comparison teachers provided different types of review prior to administration of weekly post-quizzes. However, they were not activities conducive to success for ELs (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008; Marzano & Pickering, 2005; VanPatten, 2000).

Summary

Teachers in the treatment group and comparison group used some similar instructional methods. Despite similarities, there was a marked difference in assessment results between groups. Vocabulary instruction in the comparison group offered fewer instructional methods recommended in the research specifically designed to benefit ELs, (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008; Marzano & Pickering, 2005) and those employed were implemented inconsistently. Graphic organizers were completed sporadically. Nonlinguistic representations were displayed, but students seldom applied them. Notebooks were either not connected to vocabulary or had no specific purpose. Review activities were conducted inconsistently, favored native English speakers, and did not require a deep knowledge of the words.

Instructional methods implemented in the treatment were those recommended in the research (Barcroft, 2004; Echevarria, et al., 2008; Carlo, et al. 2004; Eldredge, 1990; Foorman, 2007; Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Garcia & Beltran, 2003; Gersten, et al., 2007; Hernandez, 2003; Marzano & Pickering, 2005) and were used purposely and strategically, directed toward the communicative needs

of ELs (Mohr & Mohr, 2007; Trueba, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978). Explicit teacher explanations were used to introduce the meaning of vocabulary words. Graphic organizers were completed consistently, required peer interaction and mediation, and served as communicative tasks that provided multiple opportunities to practice vocabulary words. Notebooks served several purposes: guided and independent practice, peer-mediated tasks, and a resource throughout the week. Review games were competitive, but they required peer interaction and used descriptions and nonlinguistic representations from student notebooks. These weekly tasks were done consistently, providing structure, repetition, and multiple exposures that supported ELs' needs (Ausubel & Youssef, 1965; Garcia & Beltran, 2003; Kirylo & Millet, 2000; Lesaux, Kieffer, Faller, & Kelley, 2010; Reitsma, 1983; Stahl & Nagy, 2006; Swain, 2005).

This study showed that consistent, purposeful, and strategic implementation of key techniques and communicative activities focused on language learning and communication contributed to vocabulary growth for ELs. It contributes to the growing body of research indicating that vocabulary instruction from CRPs fails to address needs of ELs (Echevarria, et al., 2008; Laturnau, 2003; Peregoy & Boyle, 2008; Silverman, 2007). Developing and using research-based vocabulary instructional methods is one way to be sensitive to their learning styles and specific needs (Archer & Hughes, 2011; Carlo et al., 2004; Goldenberg, 2008; Harper & de Jong, 2004; Kamil et al., 2008; Pérez, 1981). As demonstrated by this intervention and the research of others (Andrews, 2006; Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2007), the communicative approach provides ELs authentic opportunities to develop strong vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary instruction can no longer consist of only "mention and assign;" it must be rigorous and in-depth (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Becker, 1977; Biemiller, 1999; Carlo, et al. 2004; Dutro & Moran, 2003; Kamil et al., 2008). This combined use of research-based practices within a communicative approach demonstrated an effective process in which teachers engaged ELs in active and meaningful learning of new vocabulary. Educators can no longer ignore the importance of vocabulary instruction for ELs; the stakes are too high.

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Examining the Equivalency of Online and Face-to-Face Graduate Literacy Courses: A Case Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to examine graduate students' and professors' perceptions of the equivalency of student learning experiences in two online graduate literacy courses versus the same class offered through a face-to-face delivery. This study applies Equivalency Theory to determine whether the two graduate literacy courses have equivalent learning experiences between face-to-face versus online delivery formats. The study found that neither online course was entirely equivalent to its face-to-face counterpart, though one was perceived to be as nearly equivalent. The findings were used to conclude that equivalency in these courses depended on participant biases, instructor experience with online teaching, and the design of the online courses. The findings of this study support Equivalency Theory.

The purpose of this study was to examine former graduate students' perceptions of the equivalency of student learning experiences in two courses offered through a face-to-face delivery and online delivery. The purpose was based on Equivalency Theory (Simonson, 1995) to determine if the participants perceived the courses taught online were equivalent to the same courses taught face-to-face.

The imposing task of bringing traditionally delivered courses online is met with conflicting thoughts from faculty members (Allen, Seaman, Lederman, & Jaschik, 2012). In a 2012 survey, nearly a third of professors said they thought the learning outcomes of online courses are inferior to those for face-to-face instruction. These same professors reported they "do not accept the value and legitimacy of online education" (Allen et al., 2012, p. 3). The same study revealed that 60% of faculty members had recommended an online course to student advisees. Facilities for higher education are continuing to push faculty members to offer their courses online in spite of prevalent research that shows conflicting attitudes from faculty members towards online education. Institutions do this because online courses are what many students want, regardless of faculty members' perceptions of online learning (Allen & Seaman, 2010a).

Offering more courses through an online delivery has forced the educational field to attempt to keep up with the advancing digital world through continual technological innovation (Thiede, 2012). The push for offering more opportunities for students to learn in an online environment was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education in a 2006 report on the Future of Higher Education where the commission recommended that "America's colleges and universities embrace a culture of continuous innovation and quality improvement by developing new pedagogies, curricula and technologies to improve learning [and] to support and harness the power of distance learning to meet educational needs of students" (Spellings, 2006, p. 25). Since the Commission's report in 2006, the number of online courses and programs offered have sky-rocketed as the result of the diligent work of professors to transform their face-to-face courses to a new delivery style (Allen & Seaman, 2010b).

Theoretical Perspective

Distance education is not new in the realm of higher education. The first distance education course was a shorthand course offered in 1852 using the U.S. Postal Service (Casey, 2008). Since that time, numerous theories and educational methods have developed which cater specifically to distance learning. Equivalency Theory is one such theory developed in 1995 (Simonson, 1995). This theory states that distance education is fundamentally different than face-to-face education, but it can be equivalent when the two course delivery types are designed equivalently (Simonson, Schlosser, & Hanson, 1999). Equivalency Theory is the driving force of this study.

Simonson (2000) attests that establishing equivalency between online courses and face-to-face courses begins at the course design stage. "Achieving equivalency in learning can be accomplished through selecting appropriate technologies for online instruction. That is, equivalency theory must be applied to design and pedagogical decisions" (p. 30). The first and most important component of Equivalency Theory is ensuring courses with different delivery formats are designed equivalently (Simonson et al., 1999). Once that is accomplished, examining the student learning experience to determine whether courses are equivalent is the second component of the theory. Simonson (1995) defines the learning experience as "anything that happens to or with the student that promotes learning, including what is observed, felt, heard, or done" (p. 9). Simonson (2000) explains these learning experiences:

> *Equivalent learning experiences are different from equal learning experiences. Just as a triangle and square that have the same area are considered equivalent even though they are different geometrically, the experiences of the local learner and the distant learner should have equivalent value even though their experiences might be very different (p. 30).*

Equivalency Theory also involves monitoring students enrolled in the course to make sure they are learning the same material online as students in the face-to-face version of the course, leading to examining student learning outcomes. The current study follows these components of Equivalency Theory by first analyzing how the courses are designed online and face-to-face, and then examining and monitoring the student learning experience.

Much research has been conducted comparing the quantitative learning outcomes between face-to-face courses and online courses (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Arbaugh, 2000; Future of State Universities, 2011; Johnson, Aragon, Shaik, & Palma-Rivas, 2000). However, few studies have compared the student experience in online courses to student experiences in face-to-face courses. As stated above, evaluating the student learning experience is the second component of Equivalency Theory, after ensuring course delivery methods are equivalent (Simonson et al. 1999). Armstrong (2011) pointed out that universities and researchers have addressed the significant increase of online learners in recent years but have failed to examine students' perceptions of these changes or how to best meet their educational needs through an online course delivery. The present study sought to examine student perceptions of the online learning experience.

Methods

An exploratory case study design was utilized to examine student perceptions of the equivalency of two face-to-face and online courses. Case studies are typically used to answer *how* or *why* questions (Yin, 2003). The current study examined *how* students perceived the equivalency of online and face-to-face learning. Two questions explored in this study were:

- How do participants compare and contrast their learning experience in an online graduate literacy course they had previously taken in a face-to-face delivery format?
- Do they perceive that the courses are equivalent?

This study was conducted at a large university in southwest Missouri that will be referred to by the pseudonym Teacher University. At the time of this study, Teacher University had over 3,000 graduate students enrolled in over 70 programs, 12 of which were offered fully online. Over 20% of students were enrolled in these fully online programs. Spring 2011 saw an increase of 62% in online enrollment across campus. Every semester since then there has been an increase of over 20%. Graduate programs within the College of Education comprised 25% of the total graduate student population. The program that was investigated through this study was the Graduate Literacy Program, which had 175 students and five full time faculty members at the time of the study.

The Graduate Literacy Program at Teacher University began offering an online option for completion of all 37 hours in the Fall 2013 semester. Two of these courses taught by two different professors were selected to be used in this study. Course A was a two credit hour course focused on diversity issues in literacy and content area instruction. Students in the course study ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic diversities and how they impact classroom instruction and student learning. Course B was a three credit hour content area literacy course. Students in this course learn how to incorporate literacy activities into all curriculum areas such as science, social studies, and math.

There were a total of four participants in the study. In order to select the participants, both professors who taught the courses contacted former students from the face-to-face sections of Course A and Course B asking for participants for the study. Participants A1 and A2 viewed the online version of Literacy Course A. Participants B1 and B2 viewed the online version of Literacy Course B. The four participants were asked to apply Equivalency Theory to evaluate whether they believed the experience they had in the face-to-face course was

equivalent to the experience in the same course taught online. The theoretical framework was explained to participants at the beginning of the study, so they were primed for examining the equivalency in the courses. Not all participants were local to Teacher University, so an online data collection method was utilized.

The four participants in the study were asked to complete an observation guide through Survey Monkey twice per month during an academic semester. These guides focused on specific aspects of the online course and asked students to compare and contrast the online learning experience they were observing to their own experience of taking the course through an online delivery. Every observation guide completed by the participants required reflection regarding whether certain elements of the course were equivalent between the two delivery formats.

These observation guides were collected and compiled into an unordered meta-matrix in Microsoft Excel (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). This meta-matrix was utilized to analyze the data for themes. From the participants' observation guides, data were analyzed to discover what participants perceived about the courses as they were taught in the two formats.

Findings

Four voices contributed to this study. The stories of these four participants provided the backdrop against which an understanding of the data was painted. Below are the stories of the participants and their views of online courses before the data collection began.

Story of Participant A1. Participant A1 was a 55-year-old White female with over five years of teaching experience. This participant started the MSED, Literacy program after teaching English in various capacities in the state of California. At the time of this writing, she taught Developmental Reading at an area community college and held a valid Missouri Teaching Certificate for Language Arts in grades 5-9 and Communication Arts grades 7-12. Participant A1 had a balanced view of online learning vs. face-to-face learning. At the conclusion of the study, she noted that "online education has its place for many courses." It is interesting to note that she teaches college courses at an area community college. After the study, she mentioned that she had enrolled in a six-week professional development course about how to teach courses online because her administrators were asking her to teach her courses through that format.

Story of Participant A2. Participant A2 was a 23-year-old White female with less than three years teaching experience. This participant started the

MSED, Literacy program immediately after finishing her undergraduate degree in Elementary Education. At the time of this writing, she was a tutor for a local tutoring company and held a valid Missouri Teaching Certificate for grades 1-6. During the study, it quickly became clear that overcoming bias favoring face-to-face learning for the study would be difficult for Participant A2. Throughout the course of the study, this participant consistently provided feedback that indicated she was strongly opposed to online learning for all courses. After looking at all the data, it was revealed that she did not answer any question about Course A positively. Every response she gave was in opposition to online learning. If she did offer a comment about the benefits of online learning such as "you can use your time effectively," it was always coupled with a comment against online learning such as, "I do not learn as much online." While it seemed that Participant A2 could see how the two delivery formats were similar, it was clear that she regarded face-to-face learning more highly than online learning. Another interesting fact about Participant A2 was in her response to a final open forum for participants to ask any questions of the researcher. Participant A2 asked if the findings of this thesis would "change the minds of administration" on using online learning. It is possible that her consistent feedback against online learning was an effort to impact the administrators at the university.

  Story of Participant B1. Participant B1 was a 45-year-old White female with less than three years of teaching experience. This participant started the Master of Arts in Teaching program after several years of being independently employed. At the time of this writing, she was self-employed and held a valid Missouri Substitute Teaching Certificate. Participant B1 was the only participant in the study who lived a long distance away from Teacher University. She had also taken the most online courses of any participant in the study. She was the only participant in the study who was not in the MSED Literacy program with an undergraduate degree in education. Instead, she was in the Master's of Arts in Teaching program and had an undergraduate degree in Business. These factors combined contributed to the unique perspective she was able to offer regarding online education. She consistently provided balanced feedback that examined the benefits and drawbacks of online learning for Course B. When asked to compare and contrast the two learning formats of the courses, Participant B1 provided an in depth two-page summary that included every aspect of the online course and how it compared to the face-to-face course. She concluded that for each aspect, she preferred the face-to-face course. She was the only participant who offered suggestions of how to reach equivalency between the two deliver formats as evident in this comment:

> *The way the discussion boards were set up made them difficult to follow. Especially the reading strategies ones (sic). Perhaps separating the initial strategies from the ones working them would have been helpful. Also it was tedious to keep a copy of the reading strategies for future use (copy & paste). Perhaps if these were posted in some kind of shared documents folder (like Google Drive) so students could download to add to their own library for future use.*

Story of Participant B2.   Participant B2 was a 46-year-old White female with over five years of teaching experience. At the time of this writing, she had completed the MSED Literacy program, she taught at an area high school, and held a valid Missouri Teaching Certificate in English grades 9-12, a certificate in Special Education grades K-12, and Health grades K-12. Participant B2 also taught a course as an adjunct at Teacher University, so she had experience with teaching college students through a face-to-face delivery. In fact, the course she taught was the undergraduate version of Literacy Course B, so she was very familiar with the subject matter prior to viewing the course taught online. She was the most neutral of all participants regarding her perceptions of equivalency between the two courses. She frequently provided feedback that indicated she believed online learning worked well for certain courses and that Professor B was adapting Course B to an online format in an effective way.

It is interesting to note how the participants viewing Course B changed how they perceive online education during the course of the study. At the end of the study, both participants responded they viewed online education more positively than they did before viewing this course online. Both participants were initially disappointed by the decision to offer this course online, but at the end they saw how effective the course was online and thus had a more positive perception of online learning.

Course A Findings

Since the goal of the study was to determine whether participants perceived the two versions of Course A to be equivalent, questions were asked in the observation guides that directly asked participants to reflect and respond to whether they thought the following 10 specific aspects of the course were equivalent: assignments, class discussions, classroom community, learning how to create a classroom community, preparedness as an educator, content, instructor presence, student interaction, class structure, and rigor. The responses to these questions in the observation guides are the basis for the information found in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Equivalency Between Course A Online and Course A Face-to-Face

Course Aspect	Equivalent	Not Equivalent	Not Able to Determine (Participants had Different Perceptions)
Assignments	✕		
Class Discussions		✕	
Classroom Community	✕		
Learning How to Create a Classroom Community		✕	
Preparedness as an Educator		✕	
Content			✕
Instructor Presence			✕
Student Interaction		✕	
Rigor			✕
Structure	✕		

Participants perceived Course A as equivalent in the areas of: a) assignments, b) classroom community, and c) structure. Participants provided differing answers about the equivalency–one participant perceived it as equivalent and one participant perceived it as not equivalent–in regard to the aspects of: a) instructor b) presence, and c) rigor. According to responses from participants, the two delivery formats for Course A are not equivalent. In order to reach equivalency, Course A online would need changes in the areas of: a) discussions, b) classroom community, c) preparing students as educators, and d) student interaction.

Course B Findings

According to responses from the two participants, the two delivery formats for Course B are nearly equivalent, as seen in Table 2. Participants believed the course was equivalent in the following areas: a) assignments, b) classroom community, c) learning how to create a classroom community, d) content, e) instructor presence, f) student interaction, g) rigor, and h) structure. The participants provided differing responses in the areas of class discussions and preparedness as an educator. In order to reach equivalency, Course B would need changes in the areas of: a) discussions, and b) preparing future educators. Regarding discussion, one participant was neutral about whether the two delivery formats were

TABLE 2
Equivalency Between Course B Online and Course B Face-to-Face

Aspect of Course	Equivalent	Not Equivalent	Not Able to Determine (Participants had Different Perceptions)
Assignments	✕		
Class Discussions			✕
Classroom Community	✕		
Learning How to Create a Classroom Community	✕		
Preparedness as an Educator			✕
Content	✕		
Instructor Presence	✕		
Student Interaction	✕		
Rigor	✕		
Structure	✕		

equivalent and one participant believed they were equivalent. However, most of the comments from the participants indicated they believed online discussions were stronger than face-to-face discussions in Course B.

Conclusion

Research shows that the demand for online learning is continuously increasing (Allen & Seaman, 2013), and the courses in this study are no exception. The aim of the study was to determine whether participants viewed the learning experience between the two delivery formats as equivalent. Since it appears that online education is here to stay, this study did not include inquiry into determining the effectiveness of these online courses or to determine if they should be offered online in the future.

The purpose of this study was not to compare Course A and Course B. However, when examining the data, it became clear the participants perceived Course B as equivalent in more aspects than Course A, as can be seen in Table 3. The percentages indicate the percentage of Participants' who believed the online course was equivalent in the particular aspect indicated.

Participants perceived Course A to be equivalent in three of the 10 aspects under scrutiny. Participants viewing course B perceived the course as equivalent

TABLE 3
Equivalency Between Delivery Formats in Course A and Course B

Aspect of Course	Course A Equivalent	Course B Equivalent
Assignments	100%	100%
Class Discussions	0%	50%
Classroom Community	100%	100%
Learning How to Create a Classroom Community	0%	100%
Preparedness as an Educator	0%	50%
Content	50%	100%
Instructor Presence	50%	100%
Student Interaction	0%	100%
Rigor	50%	100%
Structure	100%	100%
Total	45%	90%

in 9 of the 10 aspects. The stories of the participants provide some insight into why this might be. One participant who viewed Course A provided consistent feedback in opposition to online learning for any course, especially Course A. Participant A2 viewed the online version of Course A as equivalent in only three out of 10 areas, as compared to Participant A1 who viewed Course A as equivalent in six out of 10 areas. The story of Participant A1's overwhelmingly negative view of online education is one contributing factor to why Course A was perceived as not equivalent.

It was also important to examine the stories of the professors of the two courses when thinking about why Course A was perceived as equivalent in fewer areas than Course B. Both professors had been teaching the courses through a face-to-face delivery format for several years prior to this study. They both knew what worked in a face-to-face delivery format. The semester of this study was the first time either of them had taught the courses in this study online. Up to this point, the professors had the same experience with face-to-face teaching. However, the experience of the professors with online teaching was significantly different. Professor A had no experience teaching online prior to teaching Course A online the semester of this study. She had a similar perception about online learning as one-third of professors in the Allen et al. (2012) study who believed learning outcomes for online learning were inferior to those of face-to-face

learning. Professor B, however, had taught other courses online for six years, so she had experience with the online teaching format and some understanding of what worked and what did not work online. This experience could have been a contributing factor to the participants' perceptions of equivalence between the two delivery formats.

Another contributing factor to why Course A was perceived as equivalent in fewer areas than Course B goes back to the original design of the two courses. Course B online was designed identically to Course B face-to-face. Both formats had the same syllabus, assignments, number of points, and textbooks. Due to the nature of many of the assignments in Course A that required locality to Teacher University, the professor of Course A found it difficult to design the online course identically to the face-to-face course. This resulted in Course A online having different assignments, points, and textbooks.

At the center of Equivalency Theory is the idea that if the courses are designed equivalently, the learning experiences will be equivalent as well. That is confirmed through this study. Course A online was not designed entirely equivalently to the face-to-face version of the course, and participants did not perceive it as equivalent. Course B online was designed entirely equivalently to the face-to-face version of the course and participants viewed it as mostly equivalent. Thus, the findings of the study support Equivalency Theory.

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BRIDGING CULTURES THROUGH LITERACY: IMPACTING CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS, AND FAMILIES

African American Families' Literacy Practices and Language and the Literacy Development of Their Children

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Abstract

This qualitative study used interviews, literacy practices blogs, and analyses of literacy artifacts to identify and document family literacy practices of five African American families with pre-school age children. The study revealed shared common literacy practices associated with the ecology of their families. Those identified practices presented three major themes, including family connection literacy practices, religious literacy practices, and civil rights–enhancement literacy practices. Furthermore, the families viewed the literacy practices most closely associated with the dominant culture as more important.

Researchers agree that families are the first teachers of their children and that much of the acquisition of knowledge occurs within the home (Compton-Lilly, 2003; Diffily, 2004). According to Procidano and Fisher (1992), a movement began in the 1990s to focus attention on the relationship between school performance and family life. An appreciative approach to family influences on the development of children's knowledge began to emerge. In this appreciative

approach, it is important to realize that many diverse traits within families influence children's knowledge. To begin this discourse, it is important to understand cultural engagement as well as knowledge construction.

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of unforeseen literacy practices within the African American home on children's language and literacy development. Literacy practices can be described as any happening, whether intentional or unintentional, which promotes language and literacy development. This research study inspires to add to the current literature on family engagement in language and literacy development. Additionally, the findings may be of benefit to classroom teachers in terms of instructional planning. Moreover, there is an attempt to show the importance of recognizing each learner as an individual. The following two research questions guide the study:

1. What are the multiple usages of literacy practices in African American homes?

2. What are African American parents' perceptions of literacy practices in their homes?

Literature Review

Literacy and language development is influenced by many different things (Edwards, McMillon, & Turner, 2010; Lee, 2007). As researchers seek to more deeply understand this development, it is critical to consider the multiple contexts in which it arises. May (2011) notes that "How students (and teachers) have been socialized into using language matters because spoken language is the medium by which much teaching takes place, and in which students demonstrate to teachers much of what they have learned" (p.130). In order for teachers to influence student learning in the classroom in more powerful ways, they must recognize that students bring with them languages and literacies that have been acquired from homes and communities experiences. Researchers (Edwards, McMillon, & Turner, 2010; Lee, 2007; May, 2011; Milner, 2010) agree that two common threads must prevail: Students' funds of knowledge are relevant to pedagogy—they do not hold a background of deficiency. Additionally, it is perilous not to acknowledge the cultural relevancy of their funds of knowledge.

The dominant discourse portrays African American families as deficient in literacy practices, valuing only dominant practices in the development of language and literacy competencies. In the aforementioned dichotomy, there are many complexities and contradictions that should be acknowledged when considering how children from non-majority families form language and develop

literacy. Compton-Lilly, Rogers, and Lewis (2012) argue that more attention should be given to the multi-contextual literacy practices in the homes of minority families. These nontraditional literacy practices should have voice in family literacy scholarship while recognizing each child's uniqueness in the classroom.

Methods

This qualitative designed study used open-ended questions to see the "how" and "why" of a problem (Creswell, 2008). The researchers are interested in literacy practices of marginalized people in order to eradicate the dominant cultures view that African American families have shortcomings in terms of literacy practices. Furthermore, there is an interest in social improvement specifically in literacy and language and development (Creswell, 2003, 2008; Crotty, 2009).

Research Setting

The historical and humanistic stance of viewing African American families' literacy practices from a deficiencies approach is common in the dominant discourse of language and literacy development (Compton-Lilly, 2003; Dyson, 1997; Lee, 2007). As a result of this, the research location is situated in a northeastern metropolitan setting. The private Christian preschool has a large number of families typically marginalized by dominant cultures. The population includes 95% African Americans, 5% Latin descent or other, 40 students who were 2 to 6 years old.

The school consists of four classrooms, including; (1) a 2-year old toddler classroom, with 9 children, (2) a 3-year old toddler classroom with 11 children, (3) a 4-year old pre-K, with 13 children and (4) a kindergarten class with 7 students. One hundred percent of the families reside in the metropolitan area. The families were invited to participate based on their willingness to volunteer and meet a set criteria. The criteria included: (1) a parent of a pre-K or Kindergarten child, (2) self-identifies as an African American parent, (3) resides in the metropolitan area and (4) had to be technological knowledgeable enough to participate in a weekly blog.

Participation

An invitation letter was included in a communication folder the teachers distributed each day for the parents to sign. The letter included an overview of the study and contact information for parents who were willing to volunteer to participate in the study. Five African American families were chosen to be in the study. They lived in the metropolitan area and had at least one child between the ages of 4 and 6 years and attended the preschool.

The educational attainments of these African American participants were above the national average. Of the 11 caregivers, 2 were currently pursuing a bachelor's degree, 2 held a bachelor's degree, 1 were pursuing an advanced degree, 2 held an advanced degree and 1 holds a Ph.D. degree. The participants' educational attainment consists of 45% hold a bachelor's degree or higher. As a result, these African American families are considered to have middle class status.

Each family had a different family structure: (a) a married couple with three children aged 25, 19, and 6 years; (b) a single father of a 4-year-old living with his extended family; (c) a married couple with two sons aged 6 and 4 years; (d) a single mother with two daughters aged 6 and 2 years; and (e) an engaged couple with 5-year-old twins, a boy and a girl.

Data Collection

Data collection methods were chosen in alignment with critical race theory, as being interpretive and strongly tied to truth being subjective (Kinchele & McLaren, 2003). Because each researcher's ideology was heavily shaped by his or her own truths, it was important that the parents chosen for the study completed three interviews about their home literacy practices. They included face-to-face interviews, blogs, and literacy artifacts.

Face-to-Face Interviews.   Participants were asked to respond to a series of open-ended questions during their three face-to-face interviews (See Appendix A). During the first interview, all put the last question were closed questions to help the researcher/ interviewer began to establish a relationship with the family members. The second and third interviews contained all open-ended questions, which allowed for creative response options for responding (Creswell, 2007). Probing questions were used to clarify interviewees' responses with regard to the main questions.

Blog.   Each person was given the website address for the blog, as well as the beginning date and ending date of its availability. Each person logged on using a self-selected pseudonym. The identity of the bloggers was not revealed to anyone, including the researcher. The blog was active for four weeks. During the blogging sessions, the participants responded to a series of topics. The topics were broad and the researcher used follow-up questions to discuss practices, which may disclose literacy practices.

Artifact Collection.   During the second interview, an unstructured element of interviewing was introduced when the participants produced their

literacy artifacts. The participants and the researcher analyzed the virtue and importance of the artifact in relations to their family literacy practices.

Data Analysis

According to Wiersma and Jurs, (2009), data analysis in qualitative research is a process of categorization, description, and synthesis. Data analysis procedures consist of seven phases (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009): 1) organizing the data; 2) immersion in the data; 3) generating categories and themes; 4) coding data; 5) interpreting data through analytic methods; and 6) searching for alternative understandings; and 7) writing the transcribed data for presenting the study.

A data-gathering activity log was kept for organization purposes. To analyze and interpret the qualitative data, Litchman's three Cs of analysis was used, including; codes, categories, and concepts (Litchman, 2006). In this method, open coding, axial coding and selective coding is illustrated in the six defined steps.

Limitations

The current study was limited to five African American families that lived in a metropolitan area. These participants had to be technological knowledgeable enough to participate in a weekly blog. And, finally, these applicants are all middle-class African American families within one region.

Findings and Discussion

Research Question 1

This question determined the multiple usages of literacy practices in African American homes. Findings revealed that each family shared common literacy practices that may be associated with the ecology of their families. The identified practices presented three major themes: 1) family literacy connection practices, 2) religious literacy practices, and 3) civil rights–enhancement literacy practices.

These common themes are similar to those found in the literature (Johnson, 2010; Moses & Cobb, 2001; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). The families' collective themes frequently seen in family literacy discourse included literacy practices (a) for the maintenance and establishment of the family unit, (b) to preserve everyday life, (c) to establish and maintain financial needs, (d) to pursue pleasure and enjoyment, and (e) to fulfill education attainment and knowledge growth. Each of the aforementioned literacy practices translated into an important part of the process in the language and literacy development of African American children (Johnson, 2010; Moses & Cobb, 2001; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988).

Family Literacy Connection Practices.   Establishing and maintaining family connections has been routinely observed in the literature as a major use of literacy in the homes of African American families (Taylor, & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). This was apparent during the course of the current study as well. While discussing the data, all names used are pseudonyms.

Forming, constructing, and fostering family relationships are some of the ways the Cunningham family used literacy, as they have an ongoing practice of communicating through mobile phone texts, e-mail, and video messaging. "While the girls are away from home, we text a lot and Tango a lot. That way I can keep track of them," states Vanessa. Tango is video messaging. In efforts to maintain a sense of togetherness and to strengthen family bond, Vanessa attests that she sometimes reads stories to Bailey and Myles at the same time via video messaging. This works well, since Bailey and Myles are home, but in different cities.

Family connections in which interactional use of literacy practices serve as a daily function can be seen in the Duncan home. Jessica describes how Meghan helps keep her on track in the morning. "Meghan serves as my count-down girl. She watches the clock and tells me what time it is so we can get out the door." This authentic use of time offers a social context for Meghan to understand number literacy in the real world (Dyson, 2003; Purcell-Gates, 2004). Both Compton-Lilly (2003) and Purcell-Gates (2004) discuss how children acquire many aspects of the print system by participating in natural reading and writing practices within their homes.

Family connections with literacy can also be seen when CJ engages his brother and friends in theatrics-based productions using his action figures. Dyson (1997) discusses that in order for social play with superheroes to come to life, children's own conceptualized understanding of their everyday worlds must shape the play. For example, when CJ pretends to be a superhero saving his younger brother from an evil villain, he intellectualizes the family connection established in his home. Conversely, this knowledge, which can be taken for granted, comes from the social dilemmas associated with CJ's experiences. Vygotsky, Cole, John-Steiner, Scribner & Souberman (1978) contend that children have illusory freedom—a deceptive freedom that is actually bounded by their cultural constraints. Whatever the intentions, CJ's voice can be heard through his writings and illustration, which create a bridge to his home with his brother and his friends.

Daniel's grandmother allows him to use her iPad, which may be viewed as a means of family bonding. However, Jeremy, a former U.S. Marine, discusses a secondary function of the notepad, which allows him to create a schedule for Daniel. Jeremy informs that he told Daniel he is a Marine like his daddy, so he

also has to follow a daily regimen. Every morning Daniel reads the schedule and follows the plan to get ready for a day at pre-school. By promoting Daniel's "Marine schedule," the Richmond family solidifies their relationships and family connections. Johnson (2010) argued that relationships are established and maintained in interactional uses of literacy. Additionally, this type and use of literacy allows a family to gain information and meet practical needs (Heath, 1983).

    Religious Connections Literacy Usage.   Religion is a cultural system that is fundamental in the bedrock of the African American family (Taylor, Chatters & Levin, 2004). Lynch and Hanson (1997) agree that literacy practices that reinforce religious connections are common in the homes of Black American families.

    Before Keifer leaves for trips, Kenosha clarifies, "He leaves scriptures for us to read. They are the same ones he has and that way we all can be of one accord." Further probing explains that elucidates "one accord" means the family can read, study, and mediate their needs, expectations, and desires as a whole unit to God. This practice brings into line family connections made in the Watkins household.

    In the Askew family, religion is a major part of the summer. Shania clarifies that the boys love attending vacation bible school at their church and always invite their friends. Their experiences are translated into dramatic skits, scripture reading, prayers, songs, and mnemonics to help them remember the details of each story. CJ and his friends sing religious songs on the way home from church and incorporate "Bibleman" antics into their stories. McMillon and Edwards (2008) contend that such literacy practices are similar to the practices occurring at school that promote phonological/phonemic awareness, reading and responding to stories, and oral language development and retelling.

    On Mother's Day at Jessica's church, her daughters gave her a red rose, which signifies a living mother. Jessica keeps that rose in her Bible near her favorite verse, which she often reads to Meghan and Taylor. Jessica shares how she often gives Meghan and Taylor background to this particular scripture, specifying that its purpose is to encourage faith in the Lord's righteousness. McLoyd, Hill, and Dodge (2005) contend that African American families use Biblical scriptures as a coping mechanism for their psychological well-being. This literacy practice is engrained in the Duncan family and is implemented daily—during morning and night prayer and also during family bible studies on Sunday afternoons.

    This same literacy practice may be observed in the Watkins/Thomas home. Kenosha states that Jerrica and Jacob often read and reread the religious literacy artifacts in their home. As Kenosha describes, a business card holder is on

their computer desk along with a pen holder; verses on these items have been read to the children so many times that they have memorized the scriptures. Additionally, Kenosha confirms that the children often use a wall plaque and picture in their dramatic play (Figures 6 and 7). "When the twins 'play church,' Jacob is going to quote John 3:16 each and every time!" Kenosha exclaims. They also use a picture from the wall in the kitchen to construct Jacob's pulpit. These literacy practices foster culturally relevant teaching, concept of print, storybook reading and responses, phonological/awareness, and oral language development and retelling (McMillon & Edwards, 2008).

Each of the five families from the current study demonstrated a religious use of literacy practices, ranging from Myles memorizing Psalms 23 to Daniel and Angela's nightly prayers for protection of Jeremy as a police officer. The literature (Heath, 1983; Johnson, 2010; McMillon & Edwards, 2008; Taylor &Dorsey-Gaines, 1988) agrees that religious use of literacy is a momentous component of African American family life. It serves as the foundation in the construction of the language and literacy development of children from these homes. This can be seen beginning with their oral language development through songs, poems, scriptures, and verses children obtain as a byproduct of their religious practices.

> ***Civil Rights Enhancement Connection Literacy Usage.*** When marginalized groups encounter a system that does not address their needs, issues of social inequality, absolute freedom, and guaranteed privileges emerge. In the family literacy discourse, the absence of the voices of families not associated with the dominant culture demonstrates a void. This then becomes a civil rights issue (Edwards, McMillon & Turner 2010; Kress, 2005; Moses & Cobb 2001; Watkins, 2001). Moses & Cobb (2001) presented a historical discourse related to the understanding of mathematical thinking as the new battleground for civil rights. Accordingly, it is the right of African American families to develop an understanding of mathematics. Early literacy practices occurring within the homes are the foundation of mathematics thinking. These literacy practices include recording numbers, preparing budgets, paying bills, applying for loans, and maintaining schedules (Johnson, 2010; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988).

In the current study, the use of literacy for mathematics purposes indeed emerges in the homes of these African American families. When weekly tuition is due, Jeremy writes the check and allows Daniel to place the check in the designated area for deposit. Jessica shares a similar practice with Meghan. Cedric Askew browses sale papers with his sons CJ and Carlton, seeking bargains. Kenosha and Keifer give the twins a $10 allowance in $1 bills, encouraging them

to pay themselves 10% and tithe 10% to the church. Mathematics thinking is being developed in the homes of these families through routine literacy practices.

Gaining information from various print sources for global connection and awareness was a literacy practice observed during the current study. According to Johnson (2010), reading the newspaper and other media sources are ways that African American families use literacy. Shania, an active member of an international sorority, describes how the national arm of the organization is opening a school in an impoverished country that experienced a devastating earthquake and how the local chapter has held several events, including book drives, for the school. Shania explains how they purchased books from a local thrift store for the children and also had CJ donate unread books from his own bookshelf. As Shania stated, it is important for her children to recognize their obligation to help people all over the world, especially those from similar ethnic backgrounds. During the recent tornadoes in the Midwestern United States, Jessica tracked the storms and associated events, sharing how blessed her family is and stressing to her children "the importance of prayer for the families".

Study participants shared how they discussed with their children the importance of the election of Mr. Barack Obama, the first African American President of the United States. Jeremy recounts how his family watched the 2012 election results, and during the exuberant celebrations after each state's victories, Dalton was happily jumping and yelling "We won! We won!" Vanessa reports hosting a "Get Out and Vote" party at her home, and during the party, Myles and Katelyn helped stuff bags with campaign literature in support of President Obama's re-election. Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) contend that literacy practices associated with media outlets detailing local, state, national, and international events is another way African American family's use literacy.

African American families customarily use literacy for educational attainment (Compton-Lilly, 2003; Edwards, McMillon, & Turner, 2010; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). This is obvious when examining the demographics of the parents/caregivers in the current study. Of the five participating families, 7 out of 11 parents/caregivers have a higher degree and/or working on a higher degree (from BS to doctorate. The literature (Compton-Lilly, 2003; Edwards, McMillon, & Turner, 2010; McLoyd, Hill & Dodge, 2005; Tatum, 2009) argues against the dominant culture's belief that African American families do not care about educational attainment. Indeed, families in this study appear to assign a very high value to education.

Experiences within the homes of these families identify the importance of education to each family. Parents and children reading books together was a commonly reported activity. As part of their daily routine, Vanessa or Marcus

assist Myles with homework, and often include first grade words for enrichment and additional practice. Vanessa articulates, "We read a book each night. He also reads or listens to stories on the iPad." Jessica reports that on Sunday afternoons, the television is turned off, and reading time begins in the Duncan household. Jeremy cites that either he or his wife read to Daniel each night before bedtime. These African American families are thoughtful in their understanding of preparing their children for success, with nightly reading as a major component of their lives.

Research Question 2

What are African American parents' perceptions of literacy practices in their homes? Families in this study commonly perceived literacy practices from the dominant culture imparted into their homes as more important to the language and literacy development of their children than those literacy practices currently experienced in their own homes. Those practices and experiences not readily related to the dominant culture were viewed as less important.

In early interviews and blog postings, the families wanted to display the literacy practices less associated with their daily routine in-home literacy practices. When asked about literacy practices, the families mentioned reading books delivered monthly as part of a state funded book program, while several families mentioned participation in another program where children received a preselected book each month from birth until kindergarten. Accordingly, several of the books were read to Meghan so often that she memorized the text. The families discussed using flash cards to teach sight words, as Vanessa described Myles practices a prescribed set of sight words each evening.

Participating families consistently discussed their roles in their children's language and literacy development as being important when they promote practices that are aligned with school activities. However, there was little to no evidence of the role of the authentic literacy practices in their homes. Even when directly asked, responses were similar to the one Vanessa furnished: "I guess so, but I think us reading to him and doing his homework is the major factor." When asked if there were other things they did with their children that aided the development of the children's language or reading skills, the families overwhelmingly said things that were related to the dominate culture's experience: reading more books, completing more homework, and even enrolling in the national academic learning center for summer enrichment.

The perceptions of the African American families in the current study were aligned with previous research (Compton-Lilly, 2003; Johnson, 2010; Lee,

2007; McMillon & Edwards, 2008), which shows that marginalized families accept their practices as less important. Several researchers provided historical and foundational work that gives voice to marginalized individuals, contending that these families have been unheard for so long that they often cannot hear their own voices (Compton-Lilly, 2003; Dyson, 2003; Edwards, 2003; Heath, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1975; McMillon & Edwards, 2008; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988).

Study Implications

Heath (1983) encouraged the discourse to include all ways in which we acquire language and literacy development such as "ways of living, eating, sleeping, worshipping, using space, and filling time" (p. 3). The primary implication of the study is that African American families have literacy practices that are often overlooked by the dominant culture. To effectively educate African American children, educators must be cognizant of the social structure from which these children derive. In the study, religious literacy practices were one of the overarching themes. However, McMillon and Edwards (2008) found that practices related to the influential institution in the African American family have not been invited into the discourse of educating African American children. The practices that relate to the church offer a rich environment for language and literacy development.

In early literacy culturally relevant teaching, concepts of print, phonological/phonemic awareness, story reading and responses, and oral language development and retellings are considered fundamental in language and literacy development (Reutzel & Cooter, 2011). Each of these elements may be observed in religion-focused literacy practices in the African American family. Children's different learning styles and religious experiences related to literacy are considered when drawing similarities within practices of culturally relevant teaching in the classroom. This can be demonstrated as mothers Jessica and Kenosha described how various methods are used to teach new choir songs to their children. The children's choir directors use repetition, memorization, visual cues, and positive reinforcement to encourage the learning of the music. Jessica mimicked the choir directors' strategies to encourage Meghan to practice her music at home. Even though the children may not be fluent enough to read music, they were given a copy of the music to "follow along" as the choir sang. This practice aligns with the development of concepts of print as used in school classrooms, such as the use of Big Books, pocket charts, and flip charts. These tools were used for authentic print experiences, and similar experiences can be seen when children interact

with Bibles, songbooks, class materials, and church bulletins. Shania mentioned her son's "play Bibles" and "real Bibles." The play Bibles are thick board books with biblical stories and illustrations. Play Bibles are available to the boys whenever they choose; however, real Bibles were given to them at birth, and are used only when a parent is present.

Phonological and phonemic awareness, considered a major pillar of teaching literacy (Reutzel & Cooter, 2011), can be seen in African American families. Bible-based skits, speeches, mimes, and song can be observed during in-home practice for Easter speeches, Christmas pageants, and Black history programs. Poetry, rhymes, verses, lyrics, and prose pieces are used to prepare children for participation in these activities. The end-of-the-year program in which Myles participated at his church required him to learn Psalms 23, so Vanessa downloaded a musical version of the scripture to help Myles learn it. Phonological and phonemic awareness is also demonstrated as Jessica, who plays four instruments, trains Meghan to play "by ear" and by reading musical notes.

Predicting, questioning, inserting, verbal responses, and physical responses are elements of storybook reading and responses, which are present in the homes of African American families. Kenosha described how Jerrica and Jacob "play church," often using "call and response." Jerrica and Jacob create props from the materials they received from children's church. A similar experience is reported in the Askew home when CJ and his friends sing the songs and use materials they get from vacation bible school. The songs and tunes, extemporaneous prayers and testimonies, and scripture readings the children in African American families experience in their homes correlate to similar strategies that educators should use for oral language development and retelling.

School educators may draw from these shared domains of the African American literacy practices for effective classroom practices. Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines (1988) disclosed the ease of the transition of White children from the middle class into school, as their home literacies mirror the school's literacies. Only the dominant culture's literacies are reflected—all others are discounted and dismantled. This dismantling occurs when African American parents and children are led to believe that they do not have concrete home literacy practices or that their practices are inadequate. The current literature supports this finding—the assumption of African American families about their own literacy practices, which states that the dominant culture's practices are superior to the authentic practices established and grounded in their homes (Compton-Lilly, 2003; Lee, 2007; McMillon & Edwards, 2008; Milner, 2010, Tatum, 2010). Families, teachers, administrators, and stakeholders must work together to foster the philosophy, "It takes a village to raise a child," which incorporates a proper

response to the enigma of African American language and literacy development. This translates into activating student's prior knowledge and utilizing teaching strategies in which students are familiar from their home environments.

Concluding Remarks

There were three major themes on how African American families use literacy: family connection, religious connection, and civil rights enhancement. The innate desire to preserve *who they are* is apparent in their practices. They strive to maintain a family unit, to practice their religious beliefs and strengthen their civil rights enhancement.

African America families have a legacy of literacy practices. This can be seen with the responses from the interviews and the blog. The resounding questions educators must ask are whether those practices are used in the design of practices for the enhancement of African American children's language and literacy development in the classroom. Secondly, do family literacy programs give voice to the most important people in the lives of young children- their families? In the collection of data it was even more apparent the families did not realize they have established practices, which have an important role in the education of their children.

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Appendix A

Interview #1 Questions

- *What is the age of the primary caregiver in the home?*
- *What is the age of any secondary caregivers in the home?*
- *What is the outside occupation of the primary caregiver in the home?*
- *What is the outside occupation of secondary caregiver in the home?*
- *What are the highest grade levels completed/degree by the adults in the home?*
- *How many people reside in the home?*
- *What are the favorite hobbies and/ or pastime activities of the family, individually and/or collectively?*
- *What kinds of things do you read on a regular basis?*

Interview # 2 Questions

- *Could you tell me what your Saturday morning looks like? Could you describe your early morning routine?*
- *Could you tell me about your evenings once everyone is home from school and/or work?*
- *Could you describe a typical weekend for you and your child?*
- For this second interview, the participants will bring their literacy artifact to be discussed. The discussion will include question/comments such as, *Tell me about your artifact? Why did you select this item? Where is it kept in the home? What is its purpose in the home? Who uses this item in the home?*

Interview # 3 Questions

- *What types of printed material have you read to or with your child within the last week? Where did it come from?*
- *Do you ever read signs or labels to your child? Anything other than books? Do you find these tools useful?*
- *Do you think your literacy practices have any bearing on the language and literacy development of your child? Why?*
- *Do you think it is important to talk to your children about things they see in their environment? Why?*
- *What do you believe is the most important practice in improving your child's literacy and language development? Why?*
- *What do you believe will benefit your child's language and literacy development more, picture labels, accompanied by verbal definitions, or conversations accompanied by verbal definitions? Why?*
- *Are there other things that you do with your child that you think assist in developing his/her language or reading skills?*

*Follow-up questions or comments made during the previous interviews, which may have been left unaddressed, will be addressed.

Interactive Read-Alouds: A Qualitative Study of Kindergarten Students' Analytic Dialogue

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Abstract

This study explored students' use of novel vocabulary words following explicit instruction with the words during interactive read-alouds. Eight kindergarten students enrolled in one class participated in this study. Students' discussions recorded during peer talk were transcribed and analyzed using qualitative methods. The analyses revealed that children used sophisticated words in peer conversations following intentional teaching. Consistent with previous studies, this research demonstrates that explicitly teaching words and providing guided opportunities to discuss the words is one powerful method for enhancing student vocabulary (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2010; Fisher & Frey, 2014; McClelland, Acock, & Morrison, 2006).

The interactive read-aloud has been identified as one effective method for supporting early literacy development in primary grade classrooms (Lane & Wright, 2007; McGee & Schickendanz, 2007; Wiseman, 2011). Interactive

read-alouds require the teacher and students to engage in meaningful dialogue before, during, and after a text is read to students. In addition, facilitation of high quality peer conversations enhances vocabulary development (Gest, Holland-Coviello, Welsh, Eicher-Catt, & Gill, 2006; Wasik, 2010). This study examined the nature of kindergarten children's peer talk before, during, and after an interactive read-aloud and the influence it had on their oral vocabulary development. The following research questions guided our work:

1. How do children use vocabulary during their peer interaction?
2. What types of literary responses are observed during students' peer dialogue?

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) socio-linguistic theory. We applied Vygotsky's belief that children are able to develop cognitively through collaboration and social interaction. This theory suggests that teachers can enhance their students' vocabulary development through carefully planned social interactions. For this study, we chose the interactive read-aloud as the context for the social interactions. As a result, our work draws on Fisher, Frey, and Lapp's (2004) description of effective interactive read-aloud implementation practices. Our study was also informed by Beck, McKeowen, and Kucan's (2002) work in tiered vocabulary; we selected Tier Two words for the vocabulary instruction, which was embedded in each interactive read-aloud.

Further, we adapted Sipe's (2008) framework for children's literary understanding to consider how students expressed vocabulary in our study. We explicitly taught each word prior to reading specific texts using four of Sipe's (2000) five categories (i.e., intertextual, personal, transparent, and performative), which are defined in Table 1. This helped us to determine which category used for explicitly teaching vocabulary enhanced children's application of the word throughout their peer talk.

TABLE 1
Sipe's Literary Responses

Literary Response Code	Description
Intertextual (I)	Vocabulary word connected to story read
Performative (PM)	Acting out vocabulary word
Personal (P)	Personal connection made to vocabulary word
Transparent (T)	Vocabulary word mirrored child's experience

Literature Review

Vocabulary Development

Knowledge of vocabulary can affect literacy development and comprehension of text. Ultimately this knowledge can affect fluency in discourse, which can impact self-identity and cultural capital (Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, & Gee, 1996; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997). Students enter school with varying degrees of academic knowledge due to different experiences. Some students also have more background knowledge than peers, which gives them an advantage in learning new content (Arum & Roksa, 2011). This is also true for vocabulary knowledge: the more known words in a students' vocabulary, the more words they learn incidentally through effective instructional practices (Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Penno, Wilkinson, & Moore, 2002).

Children learn vocabulary words at a rapid rate in the early childhood years (Brynes & Wasik, 2009). By age six, children acquire an average of 10,000 words in their vocabulary repertoire (Byrnes & Wasik, 2009). Still, many children do not develop vocabulary at this rate, leading to gaps in literacy learning and achievement. Therefore, it is imperative for educators to strategically and explicitly teach vocabulary. Although most research on explicit vocabulary instruction has been conducted in grade three and above, this may be too late for students who are at-risk of academic difficulty (Coyne, Simmons, Kame'enui, & Stoolmiller, 2004; Tuckwiller, Pullen, & Coyne, 2010).

Vocabulary Instruction

It is possible for children to learn new vocabulary through what Neuman and Roskos (2012) consider "teachable moments," such as when vocabulary is taught during unplanned times throughout the school day as new words "come up" in conversation. However, research demonstrates that children make more significant gains through explicit instruction than implicit instruction (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2010; Dalton & Grisham, 2011). Further, through carefully scaffolded explicit instruction, young children can successfully participate in high level literacy experiences (Ankrum, Genest, & Belcastro, 2014).

Traditional approaches (e.g., memorizing definitions or using words in sentences) frequently fail to promote a thorough understanding of new words. Research demonstrates that vocabulary instruction integrated through the interactive read-aloud is an effective way to support students' vocabulary development (Beck & McKeown, 2001; McGee & Schickendanz, 2007; Wiseman, 2011). When analytic talk about texts is modeled by the teacher and followed by guided practice between peers, comprehension, oral language development,

and vocabulary acquisition can be enhanced (Drogowski, 2008; Kindle, 2009; Santoro, Chard, Howard, & Baker, 2008). When learners participate in analytic talk, they apply and advance their knowledge of novel words (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Blachowicz & Fisher, 2010; Justice, Meier, & Walpole, 2005).

Although research on vocabulary instruction continues to demonstrate the necessity for explicit instruction, there is a sense of urgency to create more opportunities to increase student achievement with regard to vocabulary, comprehension, and literacy (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2010; Wright, 2012). It appears that in classrooms across the United States, there continues to be a scarcity in rich vocabulary instruction across all grade levels (Cunningham, 2009; Wasik & Iannone-Campbell, 2012; Wright, 2012).

Methods

Context

The study was conducted in one kindergarten classroom in an elementary school located in West Central Pennsylvania. At the time of the study, approximately 242 students were enrolled in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. Forty-six percent of the students received free/reduced lunch; 95% of the student population was classified as White, non-Hispanic.

Participants

The selection of participants in this observational study was purposeful and convenient. The classroom teacher participated in professional development with interactive read-alouds as the focus of a workshop previously provided by the lead author of this manuscript, and subsequently volunteered to participate in the study. The participants were members of one kindergarten class; we invited all 17 students enrolled in the class to participate so that we could study the nature of vocabulary development in young children. Eight of the 17 students participated in the study; four girls and four boys.

Procedure

We selected books for each read aloud from the International Reading Association's Children's and Teachers' Choice list of quality literature from 2005-2013. Next, we selected three to four Tier Two (Beck et al., 2002) words per book to introduce and teach. Word meanings were explicitly taught using student friendly explanations and examples prior to each read aloud. In addition, we assigned the participating students to peer talk groups to discuss strategically placed questions

related to the newly taught word during the read aloud; this was planned to reinforce word meanings through peer conversations. For example, the word "inspiring" was explicitly taught at the beginning of *Rocket Writes a Story* (Hills, 2012). After the word was explicitly taught, the following prompt was given:

> Researcher: Remember, *inspiring* means encouraging. Who is someone who inspires you? Go ahead; turn and talk.
> Student: My sister inspires me to get my homework done.

Data Sources

We collected data from twelve observations of vocabulary lessons conducted during the planned interactive read-alouds. Data sources included observation logs, field notes, and audio-recordings of interactive read-alouds and analytic talk. Each data source is described below.

Observation logs.   Two literacy professors were trained by the lead researcher to document students' analytic talk using an observation log (Appendix A). Throughout the study, each member of the research team observed two to three students recording details about the book used in each read-aloud, routines and procedures used to introduce the new vocabulary, and student responses during the planned analytic talk. In addition, discussions between all three observers were conducted after each read-aloud; the lead author kept a log of the meetings, detailing observations made before, during, and after each read-aloud.

Field notes.   Each observer took comprehensive field notes to supplement the information on the observation logs. We attempted to collect as much detail about student-to-student conversations, interactions, and vocabulary used throughout the analytic talk as possible. Anecdotal notes about student interactions (e.g., gestures and/or facial expressions) were recorded as well.

Transcripts of audio recordings.   We recorded each planned opportunity for student talk using hand-held digital recorders. Three audio-recorders (one per student group) were used to capture the students' talk during the introduction of vocabulary words, as students conversed with their peers, and during the review of the vocabulary words at the end of the story. There were approximately three to four strategic turn and talk locations planned in each read-aloud; this allowed us to record and transcribe approximately 40 different dialogues during the peer talk. To ensure internal validity, each observer reviewed the typed transcripts for member checking (Hatch, 2002).

Data Analysis

We recorded, coded, and sorted all observational data of children's analytic talk several times throughout the analyses. Initially, the first author read and re-read each transcript line-by-line, word-by-word (Charmaz, 2006), conducting an audit trail to verify accuracy and create themes for the regular patterns of application of vocabulary words (Creswell, 2008). Next, we revised and condensed the initial codes to identify categories and subthemes of children's analytic dialogue. The categories established were condensed to highlight evidence of children incorporating vocabulary into their analytic dialogue before, during, and after a read aloud.

We used constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to categorize and modify codes throughout our data analysis. The themes that emerged during the initial stage (Table 2) of the analysis helped to answer both research questions. Specifically, we further defined the Student Talk theme to describe how individual students used words during their peer talk (Table 3); this answered research question one. We continued the analysis focusing on a coding scheme adapted from Sipe's (2000) literary responses to identify the categories and subthemes in the children's dialogue, which helped us to answer our second research question (Table 1).

TABLE 2
Overall Coding Scheme

Code	Definition
Student Talk	Students' discussion about vocabulary words
Word Knowledge	Students' awareness of the words and use of words in peer talk
Depth of Knowledge	Students demonstrate full understanding of word used in proper context
Sipe's Literary Responses	Response used to introduce word

TABLE 3
Codes for Student Demonstration of Word Knowledge in Peer Talk

Word Use in Peer Talk	Description
Spontaneous	Student correctly used word in peer talk without prompting
Prompted by peer	Student used word in peer talk when prompted by a peer
Prompted by adult	Student used word in peer talk when prompted by researcher or research assistant

Findings

In this section, a summary of the findings for each research question is presented. Examples of students' peer talk is provided to illustrate the findings in each section.

Research Question 1: How do children use vocabulary during their peer interaction?

Our findings demonstrated that the children integrated targeted vocabulary into their peer discussions when prompted with varying amounts of scaffolding. While, at times, some students used the explicitly taught words spontaneously during the turn and talk opportunities, other times, the students required prompting from a researcher or peer in order to incorporate the word in their peer dialogue. For example, during a planned turn and talk session about the word "fearless" in the story *Bad Apple: A Tale of Friendship* (Hemingway, 2012)*,* Jim required prompting from the researcher:

> Researcher: I want you to discuss a time when you felt *fearless*, or not afraid. Go ahead, turn and talk.
> Jim: When I wasn't afraid of . . . at Halloween I wasn't afraid of this clown that scary clown, and I wasn't afraid but it was a little scary.
> Research Assistant's prompt: So you were?
> Jim: Not afraid.
> Research Assistant's prompt: Also that word is?
> Jim: *Fearless*

Sometimes the prompting came from a peer, rather than the researcher. For example, in the story *Bear's Loose Tooth* (Wilson, 2011), Sidney prompted her partner, Jocelyn, to use the word "savor" in her peer talk.

> Researcher: I want you to turn and talk with your talk partner. What is something you have eaten and you *savored* every bite? Go ahead, turn and talk.
> Jocelyn: I never did anything with my tooth loose.
> Sidney: No, we are trying to speak anything about *savoring*.

This changed in a few of the last interactive read-aloud sessions as Jocelyn attempted to use the words in her responses. During the interactive reading of *Creepy Carrots* (Reynolds, 2012), Jocelyn used the word "ridiculous" without

scaffolding, and she was the first person to speak in her peer talk group after the researcher posed a prompted question.

> Researcher: Why do you think Jasper found it *ridiculous*? Go ahead, turn and talk.
> Jocelyn: I think him said [*sic*] *ridiculous* because it *ridiculous* because nothing happened.

Research Question 2: What types of literary responses (Sipe, 2000) are observed during students' peer dialogue?

Transparent response.   Children primarily applied personal connections based on their experiences when integrating vocabulary words into their talk. During interactive readings, students related experiences from their lives to things that happened in the story, and students could then discuss these experiences during the peer talk.

> Researcher: This word is *charged*…it means to move quickly toward. Like for example, in a football game the players will charge toward the quarterback.
> Jim: I *charged* someone in hockey.
> Researcher: Very good!
> Jim: It was a big twelve man and I *charged* him.
> Researcher: What did you do when you *charged* him?
> Jim: I like put my head and he had a lot of pads on.
> Researcher: Did you move quickly towards him?
> Jim: Yes.
> Researcher: That's what it means; to move quickly toward. In this story, the dog is *charging* toward the sheep to get them moving.

In most instances, students were able to identify with the word more easily when it related to their experiences. It was also observed that students had more depth of knowledge with the word when they related the word to things they have experienced.

Performative response.   The performative response occurs when a child creates an imaginative demonstration of the word (Sipe, 2000). While introducing previously taught words at the beginning of several new stories, we required students to act out the words. Students were then provided time to practice using the word and act it out throughout their peer talk. The observed students

frequently required prompting to act out the word during their peer talk. One group's peer talk and performative responses occurred as follows:

> Researcher: If you were feeling *peevish*, how would you look? Show your partner and talk about a time when you felt *peevish*. Go ahead, turn and talk.
>
> Jim: I felt *peevish*, um my sister woke me up.
>
> Research Assistant's prompt: Your sister woke you up? Why did you feel peevish?
>
> Jim: Because she just–I was sleeping and all of a sudden she said, Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!
>
> Research Assistant's prompt: And what did you look like when you felt *peevish*? Show me your face. Mmm, irritated.

Students were able to use the words correctly and enjoyed performing the words; however, students often needed to be reminded to act out the word during their peer talk.

Personal response.   Students were able to identify with a targeted word more easily when it related to their experiences. Regardless of the expected response, it seemed that students mostly talked about things they had personally experienced in their peer talk. For example, although the researcher asked students to talk about how the chicken "toppled over" the paint in the story *Blue Chicken* (Freedman, 2011), a student related the word to something he experienced.

> Researcher: Discuss and show your partner how the chicken toppled the blue paint. Go ahead, turn and talk.
>
> Jim: I *toppled over* and I *toppled over* when I was on a stump.
>
> Research Assistant's prompt: So you're talking about a time when you *toppled over*. Can you talk about how the chicken *toppled* in the paint?
>
> Jim: They pushed the paint and his head was in blue paint.
>
> Research Assistant's prompt: And what happened to the paint?
>
> Jim: It got all over the place and it *toppled down*.
>
> The student clearly was able to discuss how the blue paint was toppled in the story after the teacher prompted him; however, his first instinct was to relate the word to something he experienced.

Intertextual connections.   Intertextual connections seemed to be difficult for students. Intertextual response requires the ability relate the targeted words introduced in the text (from the read-aloud) to other books or genres

(Sipe, 2000). For example, while introducing the word "adventure" before reading the story *Bad Apple: A Tale of Friendship* (Hemingway, 2012)*,* the researcher connected the word to events that happened in *Chopsticks* (Rosenthal, 2012); a book previously read to the children.

> Researcher: I want you to think about our story *Chopsticks* yesterday… how are Mac's adventure stories like the Chopstick in the other story? Go ahead, turn and talk.
>
> Jim: Venture means to go off and find new things and adventure is like the same thing and there is another one called adventure because the books were really awesome.
>
> Researcher: Adventure because they are so exciting and the experiences are so exciting in them? So how were some of these adventures like Chopstick's?
>
> Jim: He did tricks.
>
> Researcher: Who did tricks?
>
> Jim: The chopstick and he did a lot like Mac.
>
> Researcher: What did Mac do?
>
> Jim: He was sad then he started getting happy then his worm friend cheered him up and he was–still sad then he did it again and he was happy.

When talking during the peer dialogue, as highlighted above, students seemed to need more scaffolding with making connections between two stories than with the other types of responses.

Collateral Findings

We noticed several interesting occurrences not directly related to the research questions. These points are described below.

Increased interest about words.   As the students participated in the peer talk over the course of the study, it became evident that students became increasingly interested in the words. Initially this occurred while the researcher was reading. For example, while reading the story *Creepy Carrots* (Reynolds, 2012), the students consciously noticed the word "ridiculous" was read.

> Researcher read: Creepy carrots. It was *ridiculous*!
>
> Students (Unprompted): *Ridiculous*!

The students spontaneously noticed and enthusiastically identified targeted words, which were introduced prior to the reading, as they occurred during the read-aloud. The frequency of this behavior increased over time.

Multiple meaningful exposures. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research; multiple exposures to words in meaningful contexts increased vocabulary acquisition. Students were given repeated exposure to one word (i.e., declared) in every read-aloud throughout the duration of the study. This seemed to enhance students' knowledge of the word. For example, during the second interactive read-aloud, *Rocket Writes a Story* (Hills, 2012), the word *declared* was reintroduced. The student quickly remembered hearing the word and was able to identify and define the word.

> Researcher: Next word, *declared*.
> Helen: We learned about that.
> Researcher: We did learn about that word! In what book?
> Helen: With that one (points to book).
> Researcher: That book! Do you remember what *declared* means? If somebody declares something, what does that mean?
> Helen: They, um, demand you do something.
> Researcher: Okay! They strongly state that you do something. Who *declared* in this book, *Back to Front and Upside Down* (Alexander, 2012), who *declared* something?
> Helen: The officer.
> Researcher: The principal! And the principal declared that Stan did a good job making a . . . .
> Helen: Card.
> Researcher: Card! Yes, good job! So declared means to strongly state, and in this story, the dog, Rocket, *declares* to his other dog friends that he's going to write a story.

It became clear after multiple encounters with the word that the students understood the meaning of the word. Several students integrated the word in conversations throughout the study.

Limitations

One limitation to this study is the number of participants. The study was conducted in one kindergarten classroom with eight children; therefore, these findings are not generalizable. A larger group of children could potentially support or challenge the findings.

The second limitation was the length of time spent observing the student talk and use of vocabulary. The observations occurred during twelve 30-minute interactive read-alouds; therefore, the data are only representative for that time.

Therefore, we could not determine if and how often the children interacted with the new words throughout the day.

A further limitation is the number of adults available to offer scaffolding for peer interactions. It is unlikely that one teacher could provide as much scaffolding to all students in a classroom; therefore, application of vocabulary in peer talk may not occur as quickly as it did in this context.

Future Research

Further research is needed to describe the nature of integration of vocabulary instruction across an entire day. Research is also needed to determine if and how explicit vocabulary instruction may influence students' discourse within their homes. There is a lack of research in the area of teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction, including word selection; this type of information may help to determine how to meet educators' needs and the focus of professional development.

Conclusion

It is clear that all of the observed children applied sophisticated vocabulary in their peer talk and whole group discussions within the context of vocabulary instruction when it is embedded within interactive read-alouds. While each child displayed differences in the developmental pathway toward understanding words, all of the participating children demonstrated a deepened understanding of each of the targeted words, following explicit instruction. Therefore, the use of interactive read-alouds in the classroom may have profound effects on students' vocabulary development.

Although we were careful to alternate among Sipe's (2000) literary responses when introducing words, we noticed that the students seemed to focus more on personal and transparent responses in their peer talk. In addition, it was difficult for the children to make intertextual connections in their responses. When we required the children to perform the word during the peer talk, most children used examples, defined the word, or used the word in their conversations, but they needed additional prompting to act out the word.

Affording opportunities for children to participate in high quality talk throughout an interactive read-aloud offers promise for children's vocabulary development. Children's vocabulary knowledge is a strong predictor of comprehension and literacy advancements (Stanovich, 1986; Wright, 2013). However, high quality vocabulary instruction is scarce in classrooms (Cunningham, 2009). Our study demonstrated that opportunities for quality peer talk, coupled with

explicit vocabulary instruction, enabled students to use newly taught words in conversations. It seems clear that children would benefit from the implementation of such instruction on a regular basis.

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Appendix A

OBSERVATION LOG

Date:	Time:	Observer:	Place:
Participants: S-S (Student to Student)	Introduction/ Review of vocabulary:	Routine/ Procedures: (Mini-lesson)	Students' Quotes:
T-S (Teacher to Student)		I-Intertextual	Student A:
	Teacher input:	PM-Performative	
		T-Transparent	
		P-Personal	Student B:
	Students' input:		

Rock and Read: A Fun, Engaging, and Effective Method to Enhance Reading Fluency

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Abstract

This quasi-experimental study examined the effectiveness of two instructional activities on second-grade students' (n = 51) reading fluency. During the four-week study, students in Class A received stacked instruction of both Rock and Read and Readers Theater, while Class B only received the Rock and Read treatment. Class C served as the comparison group. Five paired samples t-tests revealed statistically significant differences in treatment groups on words read correctly per minute, expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace.

In the recent report of *What's Hot and What's Not in Literacy* (Cassidy & Grote-Garcia, 2014), again reading fluency was considered a cool topic, and many respondents agreed that it should be cool. Fortunately, despite these claims, reading fluency researchers continue to explore the constructs of reading fluency (Miller & Schwanenflugel, 2008), to find more effective methods to help build fluency (Young, Mohr, & Rasinski, 2015), and to explain in practical terms why it plays an integral role in reading development (Rasinski, 2012). It is imperative

that both aspects of reading fluency be taught in classrooms, which are word recognition automaticity (rate) and prosody (expression).

The purpose of this study was to expand the existing research on reading fluency by measuring the effects that different strategies had on students' reading fluency. In the past, two existing research-based methods have proven to successfully enhance reading fluency. One is repeated readings created by Samuels (1979) and the second is listening while reading created by Chomsky (1976). This research examined the effects of Rock and Read (reading while singing) and a stacked intervention of both Rock and Read and Readers Theater on student's fluency both rate and express. Previous research suggested that these methods would likely increase students' reading fluency (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Iwasaki, Rasinski, Yildirim, & Zimmerman. 2013; Young & Rasinski, 2009).

Therrien (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of repeated readings research and calculated effect sizes of the method's effect on reading fluency and comprehension. Studies that did not consider transfer effects saw large effects on both fluency and comprehension. When considering transfer and sustainability, the effects were moderate on both measures. A plethora of research confirms that the method of repeated readings is a viable means of increasing students' reading fluency (Mathes & Fuchs, 1993; Mercer, Campbell, Miller, Mercer, & Lane, 2000; Vadasy & Sanders, 2008; Vaughn, Chard, Bryant, Coleman, & Kouzekanani, 2000).

Reading a text repeatedly helps the student gain confidence and supports automatic word recognition. "Comprehension may be poor with the first reading of the text, but with each additional rereading, the student is better able to comprehend because the decoding barrier to comprehension is gradually overcome" (Samuels, 2002, p.378). Students, who read words automatically and effortlessly, can focus more cognitive energy to reading comprehension (Laberge & Samuels, 1974).

Listening-while-reading is a research-based method that enhances students' reading fluency (Carbo, 1978; Chomsky, 1976; Gilbert, Williams, & McLaughlin, 1996). Students read along while listening to a fluent reader read aloud. The method provides students with a model for fluent oral reading, and exposes students to a variety of texts, especially important for struggling readers who might not otherwise experience wide reading (Lapp & Fisher, 2009).

In a previous study involving both repeated readings and listen-while-reading methods, Rasinski (2001) reported that both methods improved the word recognition automaticity and accuracy of third grade students. While both

methods were effective, a comparison of both approaches revealed that neither approach was superior in improving reading fluency.

A fluent reader can glide through a text smoothly while sounding conversational. In order to be a fluent reader, one must read with accuracy, at an appropriate rate, and with prosody. Similar to other processes, students need to practice to improve reading fluency and overall reading proficiency. Because practice can sometimes be monotonous, Young and Nageldinger (2014) recommend selecting texts that support reading fluency and creating contexts that engage students.

Scripts, speeches, monologues, and poetry were written with prosody in mind. These types of texts require students to critically examine the author's purpose, and verbalize texts with expressive oral reading. Moreover, texts such as these were written to be performed, and thus offer a purpose for students to practice reading. Readers Theater is a performance method that requires students to practice for a performance. Young & Rasinski (2009) conducted action research that examined the overall effects of Readers Theater on second grade students' reading fluency. The authentic approach to repeated readings resulted in remarkable progress. Students doubled their ability to word recognition automatically and experienced a 20% increase in prosody. In addition, students enjoyed performing for their peers, families, and school staff. Other research on Readers Theater confirms that the method is an effective means for improving students' reading fluency (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004, Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1998).

In another performance-based method, Iwasaki, Rasinski, Yildirim, and Zimmerman (2013) studied students' reading development after engaging in classroom karaoke. Lyrics are written for performance, and require attention to prosodic elements of reading, such as expression, volume, pace, phrasing, and smoothness (Young & Nageldinger, 2014). The students learned one or two songs each week while tracking the words as they sang. The study tracked student growth over one school year and showed that all but one student made at least a year's growth, however several students exceeded the average reading growth.

The current study reports on two fluency oriented instructional practices. The first, derived from audio assisted reading (Chomsky, 1976; Dowhower, 1991), is called Rock and Read—an activity that requires students to engage in a karaoke-like classroom activity (Gupta, 2006). The second method, a form of repeated readings, is called Readers Theater, a research-based method proven to enhance students' reading fluency (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004, Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1998).

Method

The purpose of this study was to identify and measure effects of two reading fluency methods reading on five measures of fluency, a) words read correctly per minute, b) expression and volume, c) phrasing, d) smoothness, and e) pace. Rock and Read and Readers Theater, using a quasi-experimental pre/posttest research design. The study took place over a course of four weeks with three second grade classes, two treatment groups and one comparison group. The classes were randomly assigned to each condition. The research was guided by the following research questions:

1. Does Rock and Read enhance reading fluency?
2. Does stacking Rock and Read and Readers Theater enhance reading fluency?
3. Which treatment is most effective in enhancing reading fluency?

Participants

This study used a convenience sample of students from three second grade classrooms in a Title 1 school in the Southern United States. The students ranged from seven to nine years old. There were a total of 51 participants. See Table 1 for the demographics of each participating class. Students not included in this study were able to participate in the treatments, but their data were not collected. Students in Class A were assigned Rock and Read and Readers Theater; Class B only received Rock and Read; finally, Class C served as the comparison.

TABLE 1
Demographics of Participants (n = 51)

Demographics	Class A (n = 16)	Class B (n = 18)	Class C (n = 17)	Total (n = 51)
Economically disadvantaged	56.2%	72.2%	88.2%	72.5%
Male	8	10	8	26
Female	8	8	9	25
Gifted	2	5	2	9
Special Education	1	2	2	5

Instruments

A second-grade DIBELS passage was used to measure students' words read correctly per minute. In addition, the researcher utilized the Multidimensional Fluency Scale to rate each reader (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991) which evaluates expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace; each category has a point scale from one to four with four points being the highest (Opitz & Rasinski, 2008). Following are descriptions of each category on the Multidimensional Fluency Scale.

Expression and Volume. Students receive the highest rating in this category when they read in audible voice, reads with expression that matches the meaning of the passages. Essentially, the students reading sounds like conversational speech.

Phrasing. Students who demonstrate the highest level of phrasing read in meaningful phrases and paid close attention to punctuation. This is where students also vary their stress and intonation.

Smoothness. Smooth reading is characterized by students reading without breaks or hesitations. In the case of difficulty, smooth readers quickly self-correct and continue reading.

Pace. Pace is different from reading rate, because faster is not necessarily better in this category. Students read at a conversational pace, pausing for effect, or adjusting pace for expressiveness.

Procedures

The pretest and posttest in this study was the DIBELS Progress Monitoring Oral Reading Fluency passage for second grade. The student was given a copy of the passage and asked to read for one minute. The assessor marked errors and calculated the number of words read in one minute. Errors were subtracted from the total of words read in a minute to determine the number of words read correctly per minute (WCPM). The students' readings were recorded and assessed using the Multidimensional Fluency Scale. Each reading was also rated by a second assessor in order to establish reliability. After achieving an initial 86 percent agreement, the raters compared differences and discussed until raters reached 100 percent agreement.

Rock and Read was introduced to both Class A and Class B on the first day of treatment. Table 2 outlines the treatment plan for each class. The students

TABLE 2
Rock and Read Song List

Song Schedule	
Week 1	
Day 1	Intro to Rock and Read I knew you were trouble (2)
Day 2	I knew you were trouble (2)
Day 3	Learning to Fly (2)
Day 4	Learning to Fly (1) I knew you were trouble (1)
Week 2	
Day 1	Learning to Fly with lyrics
Day 2	Roar (2)
Day 3	Roar (1) I knew you were trouble (1)
Day 4	What you gonna do? (2)
Week 3	
Day 1	What you gonna do? (1) Learning to Fly (1)
Day 2	When it Rains (2)
Day 3	When it Rains(1) Roar (1)
Day 4	Where I Stood (2)
Week 4	
Day 1	Where I Stood (1) What you gonna do? (1)
Day 2	Dice (2)
Day 3	When it Rains (1) Dice(1)
Day 4	Dice(1) Where I Stood (1)

were told that the objective of Rock and Read was to improve accuracy and fluency while reading. The teacher asked the students to following long on the SMARTBoard as the presenter pointed to the lyrics. The students only listened the first time. After the first listen, the presenter pointed out the chorus and any special features of the song and asked the class to try to sing along. Ideally the initial exposure to the lyrics helped students feel comfortable reading the words

aloud the second time. The students did not have to sing, but were encouraged to; however, students were required to follow the lyrics at all times. After a song was played for several days the students received a handout containing the typed lyrics in addition to the lyrics on the SMARTBoard. The lyrics were used for many other areas of teaching. For example, the students had discussions on the author's message or made connections to the meanings of the songs (see Table 1 for a list of songs).

Class A also participated in Readers' Theatre two days a week. The teacher selected the poems from a book entitled *You Read to Me and I'll Read to You: Scary Tales* (Hoberman, 2009). The short poems were color coded to show what each reader read and each poem possessed a clever rhyming cadence that was fun to read. The students practiced their poems in groups for three sessions and performed for the class on the fourth session. During the practice session, the teacher provided feedback on their fluency. On performance days, the groups performed for their peers.

The decision to stack these approaches, Rock and Read and Readers Theater, was based on the notion that stacking research-based reading interventions could potentially be more effective. While the students in Class A and B received treatment, Class C engaged in their regular instruction, a balanced approach. However, the regular instruction in Class C did not include specific reading fluency component.

Data Analysis

The researchers collected data before and after the treatment sessions using a one-minute fluency test (DIBELS-ORF). In addition, students' readings were scored by two professionals using the Multidimensional Fluency Scale. The data were analyzed using paired samples *t*-tests that measured five components of reading fluency, including words correctly read per minute, expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace.

TABLE 3
Treatments and Duration

Class	Class A	Class B	Class C
Rock and Read	15 minutes 4 days	15 minutes 4 days	None
Reader's Theatre	15 minutes 2 days	None	None
Duration	4 weeks	4 weeks	4 weeks

Results

Paired sample *t*-tests (2 tailed) were conducted to identify statistical differences between students' outcome measures in three conditions. Class A served as the first treatment group, receiving Rock and Read and Readers Theater. A second treatment group, Class B, received only Rock and Read. Finally, Class C served as the comparison group.

In Class A (Table 3), there was a significant difference in all of the measured fluency components. WCPM had a large effect (*d* = .87), expression and volume and phrasing had a large effect (*d* = .98), smoothness had a large effect (*d* = .98), and pace had a large effect (*d* = 1.24).

In Class B (Table 4), there was a significant difference in all of the measured fluency components. WCPM had a large effect (*d* = 2.02), expression and volume had a large effect (*d* = 1.38), and phrasing had a large effect (*d* = .90), smoothness had a medium effect (*d* = .71), and pace had a large effect (*d* = 1.90).

TABLE 3
Class A Paired Samples *t*-Test (*n* = 16)

Measure	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	*T*	*p*-value (2 Tailed)	ES[1]
WCPM	62.69	75.06	–3.47	.003	.87
Expression and Volume	2.25	2.94	–3.91	.001	.98
Phrasing	2.50	3.19	–3.91	.001	.98
Smoothness	2.25	2.88	–4.04	.001	1.01
Pace	2.63	3.44	–4.96	.000	1.24

[1]ES, effective size as measured by Cohen's *d*,
.2 = small effect, .5 = medium effect, .8 = large effect

TABLE 4
Class B Paired Samples *t*-Test (*n* = 18)

Measure	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	*t*	*p*-value (2 Tailed)	ES[1]
WCPM	69.11	80.61	–8.57	.000	2.02
Expression and Volume	1.72	2.78	–6.17	.000	1.38
Phrasing	2.44	3.00	–3.83	.001	.90
Smoothness	2.11	2.61	–3.00	.008	.71
Pace	2.22	3.33	–8.09	.000	1.90

[1]ES, effective size as measured by Cohen's *d*,
.2 = small effect, .5 = medium effect, .8 = large effect

TABLE 5
Class C Paired Samples T-Test (*n* = 17)

Measure	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	*T*	*p*-value (2 Tailed)	ES[1]
WCPM	41.47	54.06	−6.67	.000	1.62
Expression and Volume	2.12	2.06	.57	.579	
Phrasing	2.53	2.65	−1.00	.332	
Smoothness	2.06	2.18	−1.00	.332	
Pace	2.71	2.82	−1.46	.163	

[1]ES, effective size as measured by Cohen's *d*,
.2 = small effect, .5 = medium effect, .8 = large effect

In Class C (Table 5), there was a significant difference in one of the measured fluency components. WCPM had a large effect (*d* = 1.62).

For the first and second treatment groups, Class A and Class B, students' reading fluency significantly increased in all tested areas: WCPM, expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace. In comparison the only significant increase in Class C who did not receive a fluency treatment was in WCPM.

The results suggested that Rock and Read was effective in enhancing all tested components of reading fluency including WCPM, expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace. The results also indicated that the stacked treatment (Rock and Read plus Readers Theater) also significantly increased all five of the fluency components assessed, similar to the single treatment of Rock and Read. According to the results of the data analysis, daily Rock and Read rendered the largest effect sizes enhancing reading fluency in all the tested components.

Discussion

The results of this study support previous reading fluency research in that repeated readings (Samuels, 1979) and audio assisted readings (Chomsky, 1976) are effective methods for increasing students' reading fluency. This study adds to the existing research by examining the effectiveness of engaging methods on several measures of reading fluency.

Quantitative results indicated that the treatments had a large effect on words correctly read per minute, expression and volume, phrasing, and pace. Although Class A's treatment had a large effect on smoothness (*d* = 1.01), Class B's treatment had a medium effect (*d* = .71). Although both treatments were effective, perhaps the combination of both Rock and Read with Readers Theater more effectively increased students' reading fluency because it attended to all

of the components of reading fluency. The texts may have better lent themselves to fluency instruction. Poetry and song are meant to be performed, and require proper elocution (Young & Nageldinger, 2014). These two strategies are performance-based, thus rehearsal required attention to all of the components of reading fluency, including prosody.

Perhaps the addition of Readers Theater served as a motivational factor. For example, singing with a group is far different than performing a script for a group. The sense of urgency and need for practicing text may have been increased by the prospect of reading aloud alone, rather than singing with a group.

It is also important to note that Class C also demonstrated a significant gain in words read correctly per minute, which indicated that the teacher of the comparison group was indeed addressing rate, but, as Dowhower (1991) pointed out years before, the existing curriculum did little to improve prosody. Although speed does matter (Rasinski, 2000), reading is not a race. Reading fluency instruction is so much more than reading fast. Repeated readings is effective no doubt (Samuels, 1979), however teaching prosody in tandem with repeated readings has the potential to be much more beneficial, and in this case, entertaining.

Implications

This quasi-experimental study was conducted with a convenience sample over the course of four weeks. The lack of experimental design limits the generalizability, and thus context is important when considering implementing these reading fluency methods. The limited timeframe limits the ability for researchers to determine whether the effects of the methods were sustained over time. Further research could analyze delayed effects to ensure that the effects were sustained.

That said, overall this study demonstrated that the reading fluency interventions employed were effective, fun, and engaging. Rock and Read and Readers Theater, when practiced consistently, can significantly increase important components of reading fluency. The researchers recommend that teachers incorporate engaging fluency instruction that not only increases reading rate, but the prosodic elements of reading fluency that is needed for comprehension.

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Connecting the Dots: Reader Self-Perception, Strategy Instruction, and Standardized Testing

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Abstract
This quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control-groups design study involved three South Texas schools and six teachers that examined the effect of two strategies on adolescents' comprehension of narrative text. A One Way ANOVA revealed there was a statistically significant differences in comprehension scores between the two strategy groups, $F(2, 335) = 5.42$, $p < .05$, with the Split Notes strategy promoting higher comprehension scores.

It comes as no surprise to educators that students continue to struggle with reading comprehension. According to the Nation's Report Card, 67% of all fourth grade students and 76% of all eighth-grade students demonstrate only a "partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade level" (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011, p. 6). These results show that the majority of eighth grade students cannot demonstrate basic grade-level competencies.

There are many reasons for having reading difficulty. However, this study only addresses lack of comprehension. One option for improving comprehension is strategy-based instruction (Block & Pressley, 2002; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Snow, 2002). Expert readers know and use a variety of strategies to enhance reading comprehension, and it is this knowledge and utilization of strategies that separates the successful readers from struggling readers; this "strategic reading is necessary for success in school" (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1996, p. 609).

In an attempt to address the complex issues of adolescent comprehension, the connection between strategy instruction, reader self-perception, and standardized testing was explored. The three main questions guiding this study:

1. Does a single strategy or a multiple-leveled strategy better aid in comprehension for adolescent students?

2. Is there a relationship between self-perception and reading achievement?

3. What is the extent of the relationship of Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores with reader self-perception and reading comprehension?

Review of the Literature

With the introduction of the Common Core Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School officers, 2010), comprehension of narrative text is imperative. The expectation that students will read "a diverse array of classic and contemporary literature …including classic myths and stories from around the world … seminal works of American literature and the writings of Shakespeare" (Key Points in English Language Arts, Reading, para. 2-3) necessitates a strategic approach to reading these difficult texts in order to ensure comprehension.

According to The National Reading Panel, the use of strategies benefited readers and led to improvement on comprehension tests (National Institute Child Human Development, 2000). Numerous studies support the concept that strategy instruction improved student comprehension of text (e.g., Block & Pressley, 2002; Englert, 2009).

Several authors (e.g., Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Meyer, 1977; Stein & Glenn, 1979) have commented on the importance of focusing on narrative text structure for comprehension. These authors have also noted that both expository and narrative texts have a structured format. They have postulated that there is a

strong relationship between the reader's familiarity with the text structure being read and the comprehension that occurs. The structure in narrative text has been labeled story grammar and asks the reader about the main character(s), the conflict associated with the character, how the character deals with the conflict, and the eventual resolution of the conflict (e.g., Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Meyer, Brandt, & Bluth, 1980; Stein & Glenn, 1979). Mandler and Johnson (1977) contend that this structured format helps the reader with understanding and recalling narrative text.

Like these authors, we believe that narrative text is important and that narrative text is important in its own right and deserves attention. Because secondary students struggle with reading (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011), there is general agreement that adolescents' reading comprehension needs to be improved, that knowledge of story structure assists comprehension, and that strategy-based instruction is a viable means of improving comprehension. In addition, there is agreement that comprehension is multifaceted and includes factors such as one's schema, background knowledge, and affective aspects (i.e. attitude, belief, desire, and motivation (Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Klassen, 2010). Students who have a positive mind-set toward reading are more likely to have had success in reading, and believe that they can do well. Miller and Faircloth (2009) summarized this with the statement that, "To become strategic, students need both skill and will" (p. 307).

The focus of this study – strategy instruction and the participants, middle school students – has been neglected in previous studies (Wharton-McDonald & Swiger, 2009), yet these are precisely the areas that need further research. Connecting the strategy instruction, reader self-perception, and standardized testing "dots" were explored to determine their place in the comprehension of adolescent reading.

Method

This study was quasi–experimental using a Solomon Four–Group design involving three South Texas schools, six teachers, 22 classrooms and 339 students. Although teachers willingly participated in the study, neither teachers nor students were randomly assigned to the Split Note Strategy, the Plot Relationships Chart Strategy (Schmidt & Buckley, 1991), or the control group. Group assignments were based on the attempt to have equal numbers within each of the three groups.

A Solomon Four –Group design uses a pretest – posttest design with a posttest only control design. In other words, half of the participants are provided

an alternate pretest. This may help control for the possible effect the pretest may have on the students taking the posttest (Shuttleworth, 2009).

Participants

There were two groups of participants: students and teachers. The student participants were 339 eighth-grade students from three separate schools in three South Texas independent school districts. There were 175 (52 %) females, 164 (48%) males, 13 (3.7%) African American, 148 (43.6%) Caucasian, 191 (53.2%) Hispanic, 165 (48.6%) were economically disadvantaged, and 140 (41.2%) were at risk.

The six teacher participants taught English language arts using the block configuration. Thus, they taught 7 sections each with 11-15 students per section. There were two Hispanic teachers and four Caucasian teachers who had a minimum teaching experience of seven years and a maximum of 20 years.

Instruments

For this study, there were three instruments. They included Reader Self-Perception Scale, Narrative Story for the pre/posttest and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).

Reader Self-Perception Scale.   Henk and Melnick (1995) designed the *Reader Self-Perception Scale* to measure how children feel about themselves as readers. This instrument is based on Bandura's theory of perceived self-efficacy (1977).

The *Reader Self-Perception Scale* has 33 statements that are answered using a 5-point Likert ranging from 1 Strongly Disagree to 5 Strongly Agree and takes about 20 minutes to complete. Statement one is a general question to engage the students to think about their reading ability. The 32 items are divided into four factors: 1) reading progress (9 items); 2) observational comparison (6 items); 3) social feedback (9 items); and 4) physiological state (8 items). The alpha for each of the four factors were: .84, .82, .81 and .84, which is considered a fairly high reliability.

For scoring the instrument, each component is added to find a raw score. The scoring rubric puts the raw score into high, average, or low.

Pre/Posttest Assessment.   The narrative comprehension scores were determined by a pre/post story assessment. These stories used were chosen for several reasons. First, because it was believed the students would not have seen or read them before. Second, the length of the text was manageable for the students

to complete in less than one class period of 55 minutes. Third, the reading level was purposefully kept below the eighth–grade level because the purpose of this study was to determine comprehension, not grade level reading.

The pretest narrative, *Midnight Heroine,* was written by Montour (1993). The passage contains 804 words. The Flesch-Kincaid reading level calculated the passage to have a readability level of 5.6 and the Lexile level is 920L. A Lexile level is used to determine reading level, and can range from a beginning reader level of 200L to an advanced reader level of 1700L. The measure is based on word frequency and sentence length.

The posttest narrative, *An American Army of Two Saves the Day Fortier,* was written by E. Fortier (1999). It has a word count of 734 words, Flesch-Kincaid reading level of 5.9, and a Lexile level of 810L. The format of the posttest mirrored the pretest.

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) is the state assessment used to evaluate the progress of students in mastering the state-mandated curriculum, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The TAKS test includes narrative, expository, mixed selections, and paired selections. This test was used to obtain a standardized reading score.

Strategy Instruction

While many different narrative reading comprehension strategies exist, only two strategies were chosen for this study: 1) *Split Notes Strategy* (McNair & Pearce, 2012); and 2) *Plot Relationships Chart* (Schmidt & Buckley, 1991). These two strategies were chosen, as they were the exact opposite with strategy one using multiple strategies while strategy two uses only the summarization strategy.

The Split-Notes Strategy. Split Notes is a flexible, metacognitive, multiple-step strategy that provides the reader a clear purpose for reading, and specific information to discern. It allows the reader to focus on the information needed to understand narrative text. Split Notes incorporates comprehension monitoring, a graphic organizer, story grammar, a section for the reader to analyze character/characterization, conflict, plot development and provide text support for the analysis, and summarizing. This allows for the use of four out of the seven strategies listed by the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) for enhancing comprehension. This strategy also provides an additional section in which a variety of additional literary elements may be noted and analyzed as the reader becomes more adept and analytical in his or her reading.

This reading strategy was developed in the first author's eighth-grade classroom, and it has evolved after many years of trial and error experimentation. A preliminary study examined the response to the strategy of 79 eighth-grade students in multiple classrooms (McNair & Pearce, 2012). The results revealed a significant difference between the Split Notes strategy users (F (2, 79) = 5.85, p < .05) and supported the idea that the strategy improved readers' comprehension of narrative materials. It also appeared to be well received by the students.

Plot Relationships Chart Strategy.   Plot Relationships Chart (Schmidt & Buckley, 1991) is a single strategy that uses summarization to focus on the top-level structures of the story grammar hierarchy. Its emphasis is on character, the goal of the character, conflict, and resolution.

Plot Relationship Chart is a summarization strategy that is listed by the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) as being a successful strategy. The Plot Relationships Chart appears in books on reading strategies (Macon, Bewell, & Vogt, 1991; Wormeli, 2005) and in textbooks adopted by the state of Texas for classroom use (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 2000).

Procedure

Step 1.   Before the onset of the study, the first author interviewed the teachers. The teachers were asked about methodology concerning their instruction of narrative text and any specific strategies used to teach narrative text. The overwhelming majority (90%) of the teachers relied on state adopted textbooks for ideas on teaching short stories.

Their normal procedure was to assign a short story in class. Students read the short story and answer the questions found in the textbook or Teacher's Manual. The majority of the teachers reported using a graphic organizer to teach vocabulary.

Step 2.   *The Reader Self-Perception Scale* (Henk & Melnick, 1995) was administered to all students to measure how they felt about themselves as readers before the study began.

Step 3 – Summary Pretest.   Students in the two treatment and one control groups were randomly assigned to take either the multiple choice/sequencing pretest or the alternate drawing/illustration pretest instead of having a separate post-test only group. All participants read the same short story.

There were 172 participants that took a quiz consisting of multiple-choice and sequencing questions over that story while 167 participants were asked to

draw or illustrate a picture that showed the main character and the main conflict of the story.

Step 4.   Another meeting with the teachers before the onset of the strategy included instruction in the Split Notes or the Plot Relationship strategy. Teachers were again debriefed on the expectations and were encouraged to verify the strategy usage in the Teacher Documentation daily log provided.

For the two different intervention groups, the teachers introduced their selected strategy to their students. The control group received normal classroom instruction which is described in step 1.

Step 5 – Posttest.   After a six-week period of strategy use, the posttest consisting of a different short story and questions over that story was administered to all participants.

Results

Preliminary Data Analysis

In order to ensure equivalent groups, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between pretest scores and strategy groups. Descriptive statistics are in Table 1. The independent variable, strategy group, included three groups: Split Notes, Plot Relationship Chart (PRC), and Control group. The dependent variable was comprehension.

For the pretest comprehension scores, the homogeneity of variance assumption was not met, $p = .005$, but the sample sizes and variances of the groups indicate a liberal F test (see Table 1). Therefore, the results can be trusted, as no significant differences were evident (Stevens, 2007). All groups were deemed equivalent at the onset of the study as evidenced by nonsignificant differences on pretest scores.

A common threat to internal experimental validity is the testing effect when pretest measures are used (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). A one-way ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the scores of those in the pretest group and the non-pretest group with the posttest scores to evaluate

TABLE 1
Ensure Equivalent Group: Descriptive Statistics Pretest Scores

Strategy	N	Mean	SD
Split Notes	60	11.20	2.49
PRC	58	10.74	3.47
Control	55	10.36	3.81

any effect the pretest may have had on the posttest (see Table 2). There was no significant difference on the posttest between students taking the pretest and those students who did not take the pretest, $F(2, 337) = 0.221$, $p = .64$, indicating there are no significant differences in the group variance. Therefore, the use of a pretest did not affect scores on the posttest.

To ensure equivalent groups in comprehension, an analysis of the pretest revealed no significant differences in comprehension among the groups, $F(2, 170) = .94$, $p = .39$.

Strategy Instruction and Comprehension

A one-way ANOVA was conducted comparing reading comprehension of students who received different strategy instruction (see Table 3). An alpha level of 0.05 was utilized. When there is a large sample size, it is not unusual to have significant results from small deviations from normality (Stevens, 2007), so boxplots were evaluated and examined the distribution of the changes in the dependent variable, reading comprehension, across the reading strategy groups. No major deviations were found. Variances were homogeneous, $F(2, 335) = 2.04$, $p = .13$.

The posttest revealed statistically significant differences in comprehension among the groups, $F(2, 335) = 5.42$, $p < .05$. A small effect size was noted, $\eta^2 = 0.031$.

In order to investigate significant differences between groups, a Tukey post hoc analysis was conducted (see Table 4). Statistically significant differences were noted between Split Notes and Plot Relationships Chart. Practical significance was assessed using Cohen's d. A small to moderate effect size was noted between Split Notes group and Plot Relationship group.

TABLE 2
Possible Effect of Pretest on Posttest: Descriptive Statistics Pretest Groups

Strategy	N	Mean	SD
Pretest	172	11.20	3.10
Solomon Four	167	11.05	3.00

TABLE 3
Strategy Instruction and Comprehension by Group

Strategy	n	Mean	SD
Split Notes	119	11.77	2.79
PRC	121	10.49	2.98
Control	99	11.12	3.25

TABLE 4
Strategy Instruction and Comprehension: Tukey post hoc analysis

Group Comparisons	Mean Difference	*p*	*d*
Split Notes PRC	1.277	.003*	.44
Control	.651	.249	.21
PRC Control	−.625	.276	.20

*p < .05

TABLE 5
Strategy Instruction and Student Self-Perception

Strategy	*N*	Mean	SD
Split Notes	124	4.04	.87
PRC	136	3.73	1.11
Control	111	3.71	1.07

Strategy Instruction and Student Self-Perception

A one-way ANOVA was conducted exploring students' self-perception scores of themselves as readers and strategy instruction using the *Reader Self-Perception Scale* (see Table 5). An alpha level of .05 was utilized. Boxplots were evaluated and examined the distribution of the changes in the dependent variable, students' perception of themselves as readers, across the reading strategy groups. The test of homogeneity of variances was not met, $F(2, 368) = 6.57$, $p = .002$.

There was a significant effect of students' self-perception of themselves as readers and strategy instruction, $F(2, 349.78) = 3.95$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .021$. Post hoc analysis noted a statistically significant difference between the Split Notes group and both the PRC group and the control group, and a moderate effect size was noted between Split Notes group and PRC group and the Split Notes group and the control group (see Table 6). The students in the Split Notes group had a higher readers' self-perception than students in the PRC or the control group. The PRC group and the control group were comparable.

Relationship of Standardized Test Scores with Student Self-perception and Reading Comprehension

A multiple-regression was conducted on Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) reading scores, readers' self-perception, and reading comprehension (see Table 6). For this test score, there were 319 students due to incomplete data, as students were absent and did not have any TAKS data. Scatterplots were

TABLE 6
Relationship of TAKS Scores with Student Self-perception and Reading Comprehension: Descriptive Statistics

Predictor	*n*	Mean	SD	RC	RSP
TAKS	319	43.26	4.48	.38	.35
Reading Comp	319	11.14	3.07	.189	–
Readers' SelfPercep	319	3.86	1.02	–	–

TABLE 7
Relationship of TAKS Scores with Student Self-perception and Reading Comprehension: Multiple-Regression Results for Standardized Test Scores

Predictor	B	SE B	ß	*t*-test	*p*	sr^2	VIF
Reading Comprehension	.473	.074	.324	6.41	<.01*	.10	1.04
Readers' Self-Perception	1.02	.222	.284	5.62*	<.01*	.08	1.04

*p <.05

analyzed, and no curvilinear relationships between TAKS scores with students' self-perception and reading ability or heteroscedascity were evident.

There was a statistically significant relationship between TAKS scores, reading comprehension, and readers' self-perception. A large effect size was noted with approximately 22% of the variance accounted for in the model, $R^2 = .221$. Reading comprehension was a statistically significant predictor of higher TAKS scores accounting for approximately 10% of the variance. Readers' self-perception was a statistically significant predictor of higher TAKS scores and accounted for 8% of the variance (see Table 7).

Discussion

Analysis of the data was used to answer the three research questions (RQ): 1) Does a single strategy or a multiple-leveled strategy better aid in comprehension for adolescent students?; 2) Is there a relationship between self-perception and reading achievement?;

3) What is the extent of the relationship of Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores with reader self-perception and reading comprehension?

Research Question 1

Scores indicated that students who used the multiple-level Split Notes strategy performed better on posttest narrative comprehension than students using the

single-level Plot Relationship Chart or the students in the control group students. Although there were statistically significant differences between the Split Notes and the PRC groups, the effect size was small. In addition, the differences between Split Notes and the control group were not statistically significant. These results are puzzling, and need to be explored in future studies.

The data from this study pertaining to strategy instruction gives limited support to those researchers who maintained that students who have a systematic plan for reading generally have better comprehension (e.g., Liang & Dole, 2006; Pardo, 2004; Sweet & Snow, 2003; Pressley, 2002), because if it was true, both strategies should have led to better comprehension. However, only the Split Notes appeared to improve student comprehension results. In addition, the data analysis also revealed that the PRC did not lead to improvement over the regular classroom instruction. Therefore, the comprehension strategies used does make a difference. Consequently, the results of this study agreed with the results from other studies that suggested the knowledge of text structure and story grammar aids in adolescent comprehension of narrative text (Dole, Brown, & Trathen, 1996; Idol & Croll, 1987; McNair & Pearce, 2012; Meyer, Brandt, & Bluth, 1980).

Research Question 2

The findings on the effect of strategy instruction on reading comprehension supported the idea than using a combination of strategies is more effective in increasing comprehension (Faggella-Luby, Schumaker, & Deshler, 2007; Hilden & Pressley, 2007; Palinscar & Brown, 1984). Students utilizing the multiple level Split Notes strategy outperformed students using the single level PRC strategy. One possible explanation is that having multiple strategies allowed the reader to create a clearer picture and to better understand the text. Having a multiple-level strategy allowed the reader to better monitor comprehension and change to a different tactic if comprehension did not take place. Paris and Paris (2001) supported this premise when they stated, "Learning depends on assessment of both product and process to know what is known, what requires additional effort, and what skills are effective" (p. 95). The Split Notes strategy incorporated multiple metacognitive strategies into one strategy, and the students who utilized Split Notes outperformed the single-strategy, Plot Relationship Chart. Although the Split Notes group outperformed the control group, the difference was not statistically significant. These results are puzzling, and need to be explored in future studies.

Research Question 3

One finding of this study was that students with higher self-perception as readers had higher TAKS scores. This finding supports Cloer and Ross's (1997) position

that, "There is a high relationship between the scores of standardized reading tests and children's self-perceptions as readers" (p. 93). The students who had better reading comprehension and a higher self-perception of themselves as readers had higher TAKS scores.

Although one purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between self-perception and achievement, results from the *Reader Self-Perception Scale* indicated that students in the Split Notes group had a higher self-perception of themselves as readers. Since the survey was conducted at the beginning of the study, the results were not due to strategy instruction. It does suggest, however, that the interaction of self-perception and strategy instruction may lend itself to further investigation.

Discussion

There are numerous studies supporting strategy use in helping students to comprehend text. Students who have achieved the status of being a proficient reader, according to Pressley and Afflerbach (1995), have achieved it by utilizing several comprehension strategies. If students "who have made positive associations with reading tend to read more often, for longer periods of time, and with greater intensity" (Henk & Melnick, 1995, p. 470) tend to be proficient and more confident readers, these students may be inclined to view themselves as good readers. This self-perception a student has will either encourage or encumber learning (Schunk, 1982). The results from this study seemed to confirm these assertions. Students who had better reading ability as measured by TAKS had higher perceptions of themselves as readers, and in turn, those students with higher perceptions of themselves as readers and higher reading comprehension had higher TAKS scores.

The results of this study supported the premise that instruction in multiple step strategies aids reader comprehension and is preferable to instruction and student use of simpler or single strategies. There are also many unanswered questions as well, specifically the lack of a significant difference between the strategy use groups of students and the control group of students. Although results of this study suggested that strategy instruction, especially the Split Notes strategy, yielded better results on the students' comprehension of narrative text, seven weeks is not enough time for a strategy to be incorporated into a student's repertoire of strategies. Pressley el al (1992) suggested that years would be needed to have students strategically use a multiple strategy. However, comprehension gains on standardized reading tests can be seen with just a semester to a year of strategy instruction (Anderson, 1992; Brown et al., 1995; Collins, 1991). A study longer than seven weeks, as was the originally intent for this study, could have resulted in larger differences between the groups.

A second explanation for the lack of significant differences arises from the timing of the study, which was at the end of the school year. Since the study occurred after the TAKS test, whether real or imagined, the perception by both students and teachers that the school year is "over" arises. This perception could have detrimentally affected how the strategy instruction was taught by the teacher and perceived by the students. As was previously stated, the teachers in the classrooms using the strategies were not monitored to assure fidelity of treatment. They documented the use of the strategies, and they were interviewed, but it could be possible that the strategy instruction and use was not always implemented as intended. The fact that the study was at the end of the school year could also have influenced the effort of the students on the pretest and/or the posttest, especially since the pretest and posttest were "not for a grade."

A third explanation for the lack of significant differences could relate to the differences in the groups reading ability and self-perception as readers. The groups were not equal in either of these factors. While the interaction of reader self-perception and strategy use is an area with much being unknown. The results of this study could have been influenced by these factors.

Although the findings of this study tend to support the notion that direct instruction in story grammar improves comprehension of narrative text, they are not conclusive. The results from this study also raise numerous questions on the effectiveness of Split Notes for struggling students as opposed to proficient readers. The groups were not equal in reading ability. Because the majority of students in the Split Notes group had higher reading ability and higher self-perception as readers than the students in the PRC and the control group, it would be interesting to see if the outcome would have yielded results that are more positive with the students who had lower reading ability.

The results of this study could be allotted only limited statistical legitimacy because students and teachers were not randomly assigned to the Split Notes, PRC, or the control group; some of the results had a small effect size, and some of the findings were not statistically significant. In spite of these concerns, this study provides a valuable framework for additional studies examining the effectiveness of multiple strategies and single or similar strategy based instruction and its effect on adolescent comprehension. An examination of the mean scores in this study indicated the use of the strategies improved comprehension scores. The results of this study also found that a relationship existed between reader self-perception and TAKS scores. These results of this study, as well as results from previous investigations that analyzed the Split Notes strategy (McNair, 2011; McNair & Pearce, 2008; McNair & Pearce, 2012), supported the use of Split Notes as a means to assist eight-grade students with the comprehension of narrative

text. The different Split Notes strategy investigations yielding consistently similar results lend credence to future research possibilities.

Conclusion

Although it is thought that the teaching of story grammar is not needed past the fourth grade (Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Stein & Glenn, 1979), the results of this study, combined with that of other studies (e.g., McNair & Pearce, 2012; Denner, Rickards, & Albanese, 2003) support the premise that systematic strategic instruction is important in building narrative comprehension. This study also indicated that not all comprehension strategies are equally successful.

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Teachers as Reading Models: Secondary English Language Arts Teachers Share Their Reading Habits and Experiences

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the personal reading experiences of English Language Arts teachers (ELA) and how that affects their attitude toward the teaching of reading, specifically demonstrating or modeling practices, in the classroom. Participants in this study included 158 Secondary English Language Arts teachers currently teaching in grades 6-12 in the state of Texas. Survey results revealed that the majority of the respondents claimed they were readers. Further, ELA teachers with graduate hours were readers and better reading models. Finally, the teachers at schools that received performance ratings of the "Recognized" and "Exemplary" reported more implementation of modeling practices.

A common theme in educational research has been that teachers are influential in their students' literacy development (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Daisey, 2010; Gambrell, 1996; Ruddell, 1995). Students spend as much as one-third of the day with teachers. In the elementary grades, teachers tend to see a smaller number of students for longer periods of time. In the later grades, as children enter into adolescence, teachers come in contact with an increasing number of students during the school day, and likewise, students have shorter contact with more teachers. Consequently, as a result of the amount of time students spend in school, teachers are in a position to influence children's academic and

personal lives positively or negatively (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Nathanson, Pruslow, & Levitt, 2008; Ruddell, 1995).

The teacher is an important factor when we look at motivating students as readers, improving literacy instruction, and raising academic achievement. In fact, overall it is not an exaggeration to claim that teachers represent the reading models children and adolescents encounter most frequently (Daisey, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2012; Durall, 1995; Gambrell, 1996; Ruddell, 1995). Applegate and Applegate (2004) noted that teachers are well suited to influence their students' reading and literacy development by promoting and valuing reading inside and outside the classroom. Gambrell (1996) asserted that "teachers who love reading and are avid readers themselves have students who have higher reading achievement than do the teachers who rarely read" (p. 20). While Gambrell's statement was based upon the results of her study with elementary teachers, in subsequent work she stated that this was also true for students in later grades (Gambrell, 2011).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the reading experiences and habits of Texas middle and secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers. A related purpose of this study is to determine whether or not an ELA teacher's personal experience with reading relates to their students' reading achievement. This study examined the relationship between the teachers' personal reading experiences, behaviors, and characteristics. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are English Language Arts teachers' reading experiences?
2. Do English Language Arts teachers' reading habits differ based upon demographics?
3. Do English Language Arts teachers' modeling practices differ based upon demographics?
4. What is the relationship between English Language Arts teachers' reading/teaching practices and schools' characteristics?

Literature Review

In *Becoming a Nation of Readers,* Anderson, Heibert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) emphasized the important role of teachers as role models and instructors from the elementary through secondary grades. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2011), it is estimated that the average child spends up to 1,289 hours a year in school. Consequently, middle and high school students

spend as much or more time with their teachers than they do with their parents (Organization of Co-operation for Economic Development, 2011; Wolk, 2008). This means that teachers are in a unique position to influence students' views on reading through modeling practices.

Different researchers have noted that modeling practices can be accomplished by simply providing opportunities for students to discuss what they are reading with teachers and peers (Benevides & Peterson, 2010; Carlsen & Sherrill, 1988; Commeyras, Bisplinghoff, & Olson, 2003; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Morrison, Jacobs, & Swinyard, 1999; Nathanson, Pruslow, & Levitt, 2008). Discussion involves sharing, talking about, listening to, encouraging, and expressing ideas. Talking about and sharing insights about good books, as well as recommending books for students to read help to build student motivation to read (Nathanson, Pruslow, & Levitt, 2008). In addition, teachers who value and share their personal reading are more likely to use literacy instructional strategies such as sustained silent reading, book discussions and literature circles in the classroom (McKool & Gespass, 2009).

Thus, there is a plethora of research that shows there is a strong connection between teachers' personal reading habits both in and outside of the classroom and their instructional practices as they are more likely to use collaborative strategies, create positive experiences with books, allow time for daily reading, impact students' enthusiasm for reading, relationship between teacher qualifications and student achievement and reading scores and the link between socioeconomic status of a school's students and reading achievement (e.g., Carlsen & Sherrill, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2012; Durall, 1995; Lindsey, 1969; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Morrison, Jacobs, & Swinyard, 1999; NAEP, 2012; Nathanson, Pruslow, & Levitt, 2008).

The existing research established that a strong relationship exists between teacher qualifications and student achievement. In the field of reading, research supports the position that highly skilled and qualified teachers are associated with reading scores (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Durall, 1995); student achievement, and advance work in reading (Darling-Hammond, 1999). There is also a relationship between socioeconomic status of a school's students and reading achievement (NAEP, 2012).

However, research studies examining the reading habits and behaviors of middle and secondary ELA teachers are few and dated. Various researchers have made the argument that the dynamics of literacy in this digital age have changed because of web-based and electronic access (Biancarosa, 2012; Dean, 2004; Gee, 2000; IRA, 2012). That plus, the dated nature of studies completed more than

20 years ago leaves open the question of what are the current reading habits and behaviors of ELA teachers.

Methods

Using quantitative analysis, this study examined the reading histories and habits of 158 ELA educators currently teaching in grades 6-12 in the state of Texas. The participants were contacted through a state organization for ELA teachers. A summary of the study and web link for the questionnaire were posted on the organization's website. In addition, the communications manager sent an email containing the same information to their members. Participants were also contacted via social networking sites, e-mail, and/or in-person through professional colleagues in the field of education.

The respondents participated through an online questionnaire. This study did not lend itself to calculating a response rate because it was delivered online to different groups of teachers through social networking sites and a professional organization's email lists. Therefore, there was no way to calculate or even estimate how many requests were made and the return rate of those requests.

Participants

The participants were 158 English Language Arts classroom middle school and high school teachers across the state of Texas. All participants were 21 to 46 years of age and 70% were over the age of 35. The majority of the respondents were female (89%). The ethnicities of the ELA teachers were 74% Caucasian, 18% Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin; 4% Black; 2% Asian Indian, 1% American Indian or Alaska native; and 1% other.

Approximately half of the teachers were middle/junior high school teachers (48%) and the other half were senior high school teachers (48%). There was a small minority of the teachers that actually taught both middle and high school students (4%).

Data Collection Instruments

The primary data collection instrument was a modified version of the Reading Behaviors Questionnaire (RBQ) used in Stock's (2011) dissertation. The researcher modified RBQ section on demographic information to fit the target population. The following changes were also made: (a) changed the Likert scale to a five-point scale that included *never, rarely, sometimes, very often,* and *always*; (b) modified the third section of the questionnaire by inserting questions that

specifically address the teachers as reading models, and (c) removed the open-ended questions from the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

A statistical program was used to analyze the data with three different tests: Chi Square Test, Kruskal-Wallis H Test, and Mann-Whitney U Test. Kruskal-Wallis H Test and Mann-Whitney U Test were used to explore group differences. A Chi Square Test was conducted to determine whether or not there was a relationship between two categorical variables, which compared the frequencies of responses to questions on the RBQ.

Results

The researcher initially wanted to examine how the reading proficiency of the ELA teachers, or how they saw themselves as readers, connected to their reading experiences, reading habits, and modeling practices in the classroom. However, 90% (n = 125) of the respondents reported that they are above average and there were very few (9.4%, n = 13) who reported that they were average, while none reported being below average. Consequently, the researchers examined four research questions.

Research Question 1. What are English Language Arts teachers' reading experiences?

Results indicate that the ELA teachers saw themselves as readers with 91% (n = 125) of the respondents reported that they were above average. Very few (9%, n = 13) reported that they were average, while none reported being below average.

In addition, the Chi Square test found that a significant association existed between "I visited the public library or bookstore," χ^2 (8) = 15.88, p ≤ .05, and "I recall books being available in my classroom for leisure reading," χ^2 (8) = 19.75, p ≤ .05. No other significant associations were found.

The researcher also examined the differences in ELA teachers reading experiences as a child using the survey question regarding the teachers' age as a factor. The teachers were divided into three age groups: Generation Y (ages 21 to 27), Generation X (28 to 45), and Baby Boomers (46 and older).

The responses to "access to books in the home" varied by age groups. Looking at the *very often* and *always* column totals, Generation Y reported having more access to books in the home (100%) than do the other two groups, Generation X (91.3%) and the Baby Boomers (83.7%). Differences also existed in the frequency ELA teachers reported having "visited the public library or bookstore" as a child. Generation Y visited the public library or bookstore less

than the other groups. Fifty-percent (50%) of Generation Y rarely visited the library or bookstore whereas only ten percent (10%) of Generation X and 16% of the Baby Boomers went rarely.

The majority of Generation Y (88%) responded that they were read to at home. Surprisingly, none of them reported that they were *never* or *rarely* read to at home unlike Generation X (14%) and the Baby Boomers (17%) who indicated they had never been read to at home. The presence of books in the classroom appeared to have increased during the years. Forty seven percent of the Baby Boomers and 63 % of Generation X reported books were available in the classroom.

Research Question 2. Do English Language Arts teachers' reading habits differ based upon demographics?

Teachers reading habits were analyzed on age, certification, highest degree, graduate hours in a subject, and grades taught. A cross tabulation of the three age groups of ELA teachers' responses (Generation Y, Generation X, and Baby Boomers) and current reading habits (e.g., leisure and academic purposes for reading and 11 kinds of materials read) are presented in Table 1. The teachers reported somewhat similar responses between reading for leisure and reading for academic purposes. Materials read varied with a high of 17% of the teachers reading children's books and a low of 4% reading dramas.

TABLE 1
Cross tabulations: Age Factor (21-35, 36 – 45, and 46+ Age Groups) and Reading Habits

Reading Habits	χ^2	df	p	ES
Leisure	5.76	8	.672	.146
Academic purposes	7.91	8	.442	.171
Informational purposes	7.64	8	.470	.168
Children's picture books	16.22	8	.039	.245
Young adult literature	5.22	8	.734	.139
Fiction	7.74	8	.459	.169
Non-fiction	6.35	8	.608	.153
Poetry	4.95	8	.763	.135
Drama/plays	4.65	8	.794	.131
Magazines	8.89	8	.352	.181
Newspapers	15.01	8	.059	.236
Online	8.92	8	.349	.182
Religious material	13.00	8	.112	.219

Note: N = 135

A Kruskal-Wallis Test revealed a statistically significant difference in "reading children picture books" across three different groups (Generation X, n = 41: New Boomers, n = 46: Baby Boomers, n = 48: x^2 (2, n = 135) = 7.31, p = .026. The Generation X age group recorded a higher median score (Md = 19) than the other two age groups, which were Md = 17 for the New Boomers and Md = 10 for the Baby Boomers. The researcher found that for the teacher's degree area only the English degree appeared to have significant relationships to reading habits. A Kruskal-Wallis Test revealed a statistically significant difference with graduate hours earned in English: reading for academic purposes, χ^2 (4) = 10.02, p ≤ .05; informational purposes, χ^2 (4) = 9.50, p ≤ .05; and poetry, χ^2 (4) = 10.28, p ≤ .05. The other demographic areas examined (certification route, highest degree, and grade taught) had no significant relationships to any of the thirteen reading habits.

Research Question 3. Do English Language Arts teachers' modeling practices differ based upon demographics?

The results of the responses to modeling practices were analyzed, and the results of the cross-tabulation of age groups and modeling practices are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Cross tabulations: Age Factor, 21-35, 36- 45, 46+ Age Groups, and Modeling Practices

Modeling Practices	χ^2	df	p	ES
Share authentic literature	6.31	8	.613	.154
Share books through read alouds	9.42	8	.308	.188
Talk about reading and/or books	1.58	6	.954	.077
Recommend books to individual students	10.43	6	.108	.198
Recommend books to my class(es)	3.69	6	.719	.118
Recommend books to students by genre	2.60	8	.957	.099
Recommend books to students by theme	2.95	8	.938	.105
Encourage or invite suggestions for book from students	5.95	8	.653	.150
Share what I am reading	5.34	8	.721	.142
Share interesting reading facts or news	15.43	8	.051	.241
Share my curiosity/questions with my students	17.13	8	.029	.254
Express my enthusiasm for/enjoyment of reading.	18.20	6	.006	.262

Note: N = 133.

There were two of 12 modeling practices found to differ based on age, the demographic data used in this study. The cross tabulations of age and the 12 modeling practices indicated a relationship between the age groups and the frequency teachers share their curiosity, $\chi^2(8) = 17.13$, $p \leq .05$ and expressing their enthusiasm for and/or enjoyment of reading, $\chi^2(6) = 18.20$, $p \leq .05$. Sharing interesting reading facts or news was not statistically significant at the .05 level.

Research Question 4. What is the relationship between English Language Arts teachers' reading/teaching practices and schools' characteristics?

The responding ELA teachers identified their schools on the survey questionnaires. The information used to determine school characteristics was public data compiled by the state of Texas and federal government as a part of schools' accountability measures identifying the following: economically disadvantage percentages and Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) performance ratings.

There was an association between the schools' AEIS performance ratings and ELA teachers' modeling practices in the classroom. There was an association between AEIS performance ratings and six (6) of the 12 modeling practices: performance rating and "I share authentic literature," $\chi^2 (12) = 20.93$, $p \leq .05$, performance ratings and "I talk about reading and/or books," $\chi^2 (9) = 25.94$, $p \leq .05$; performance ratings and "I recommend books to individual students," $\chi^2 (9) = 20.13$, $p \leq .05$; performance ratings and "I encourage to invite suggestions for books from students," $\chi^2 (12) = 21.85$, $p \leq .05$; performance ratings and "I share interesting reading facts or news," $\chi^2 (12) = 22.76$, $p \leq .05$; and performance ratings and "I express my enthusiasm for and/or enjoyment of reading," $\chi^2 (9) = 26.92$, $p \leq .05$. The results of the cross tabulation of AEIS performance ratings and the 12 modeling practices are presented in Table 3.

Using the Kruskal-Wallis test, more specifically, a relationship was found between five of the 12 ELA teachers' reading/teaching practices and schools' characteristics (AEIS performance ratings). There was an association with teachers "talking about reading and/or books" and teachers "expressing their enthusiasm for and/or enjoyment of reading" with a school's performance rating (see Table 4) at the .05 level. The Kruskal-Wallis revealed a statistically significant difference between the teachers "talking about reading and/or books" in their classroom and the four ratings, (Gp1, n = 4: academically unacceptable, Gp2, n = 87: academically acceptable, Gp3, n = 30: recognized, Gp4, n = 7: exemplary), $\chi^2 (3, n = 128) = 9.98$, $p = .019$. There were not enough valid cases to perform the median test for "talk about reading and/or books." Therefore, no statistics were computed.

TABLE 3
Crosstabulations: AEIS Performance Ratings and Modeling Practices

Modeling Practices	χ^2	df	*p*	ES
Share authentic literature	20.93	12	.051	.233
Share books through read alouds	11.51	12	.486	.173
Talk about reading and/or books	25.94	9	.002	.260
Recommend books to individual students	20.13	9	.017	.229
Recommend books to my class(es)	16.13	9	.064	.205
Recommend books to students by genre	8.19	12	.770	.146
Recommend books to students by theme	6.33	12	.899	.128
Encourage or invite suggestions for book from students	21.85	12	.039	.239
Share what I am reading	10.02	12	.614	.162
Share interesting reading facts or news	22.76	12	.030	.243
Share my curiosity/questions with my students	15.10	12	.236	.198
Express my enthusiasm for/enjoyment of reading.	26.92	9	.001	.265

Note: N = 128.

The Kruskal-Wallis revealed a statistically significant difference between the teachers "expressing their enthusiasm for and/or enjoyment of reading" in their classroom and the four ratings, (Gp1, n = 4: academically unacceptable, Gp2, n = 87: academically acceptable, Gp3, n = 30: recognized, Gp4, n = 7: exemplary), χ^2 (3, n = 128) = 13.61, p = .003. There were not enough valid cases to perform the median test for "express my enthusiasm for or enjoyment of reading." Therefore, no statistics were computed.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

There are several delimitations of this study. First, the participants were a convenience sample limiting the participants to volunteers in Texas. Second, was the decision to use self-reported data collected through on an online tool. Although measures were taken to ensure the honesty of teachers (e.g. their participation was confidential and the survey was privately completed online), self-reported data is normally higher than what is actually observed. Third, an existing questionnaire was modified for this study.

In addition to the above delimitations, there are several limitations that should be kept in mind. First, only 25% of Texas teachers had graduate degrees.

However, more than 50% of the participants had successfully completed graduate course work. In addition, there was a relatively small number of participants who taught in academically low performing and/or low socio-economic districts.

Discussion

The results of this study support the findings of prior research that English teachers see themselves as readers. The responses to the question regarding reading experiences indicated that the majority of ELA teachers had positive experiences with reading. This result is consistent with Hipple and Giblin's (1971) findings that teachers who specialize in the area of English or reading are generally perceived as being readers, enjoy reading, and talk about reading and/or books experiences. That has not changed in the last 50 years; ELA teachers still see themselves as readers and enjoy reading.

The data indicates that there is a difference between the older and younger teachers. Secondary ELA teachers' age was closely related to "visiting the public library and/or bookstore." The question, "books were available in the classroom" explored the idea of classroom libraries. According to the participants' responses, access to books has increased over the years with Generation Y or New Boomers (ages 21-27) having more access than any of the other age groups. The responses also indicate that the New Boomers, as children, had not utilized the public library as much as those of previous generations (see Table 1). Possible reasons for this could be an increase in the availability of books in the schools, an increase in bookstores, and the rise of computers.

Answers to the survey indicate that ELA teachers read a variety of materials. There was an association between reading habits and "children's picture books" and reading habits and "read newspapers" (see Table 2). Relatively, few ELA teachers reported that they did not read or rarely "read children's picture books." Those ELA teachers that were over 46 years of age tended to read more newspapers than the younger teachers. Overall, the number of ELA teachers who reported reading the newspaper increased as the age as the teachers' ages increased. Since overall newspaper circulation has decreased over the last 20 years (Newspaper Association of America, 2012) as alternative forms of information providers has increased, this finding was consistent with societal trends. Regardless of the demographic variable used to run the analysis, there was less interest in "reading poetry" and "reading drama/plays" than reading other materials.

The teachers' factors of initial certification, graduate hours in reading, grade levels taught, age, highest degree attained, and teaching experience showed no relationship to the secondary ELA teachers' reading habits. However, the number of graduate hours in English was significantly related to their reading

habits. Graduate hours in English also had a significant association with the classroom modeling practices. Two possible related explanations could explain this finding. The first is that in Texas, graduate degrees for public school teachers are optional. Those ELA teachers who enjoyed reading and literature would be expected to be more likely to pursue graduate English classes. The second is that since graduate work is optional in Texas, those teachers who had a stronger sense of being "English teachers" voluntarily pursued graduate education.

The percentage of economically disadvantaged students did not show any significant associations with the ELA teachers' reading experiences and modeling practices. A school's economically disadvantaged percentages did indicate an association with "reading drama and/or plays" (see Table 3). Therefore, it seems that those events that the National Endowment of the Arts (2004) categorized as "cultural and leisure activities" could be impacted by the students' and schools' socioeconomic status. Otherwise, the socioeconomic status of the school is not related to reading habits of the teachers who participated in this research.

It had been hypothesized that the socioeconomic status of the school community would be related to the teachers' reading experiences and reading habits. The analysis indicated that the Texas schools' AEIS performance ratings were related to the teachers' early reading experiences and current reading habits. Performance ratings did show a relationship with teachers having "books accessible in the home," "reading other materials," and "reading fiction." However, additional testing did not confirm these findings. This finding was surprising because of the researcher's personal experiences in the public schools. One possible explanation for this finding could have been that the teachers who participated in this research were not necessarily representative of the wider range of secondary Texas' ELA teachers. This is supported by the fact that in Texas only 25% of public school teachers have earned a graduate degree. In this sample, over 50% had taken graduate coursework.

Implications for Future Research

Existing studies of teachers reading habits identified the reading habits of preservice teachers and elementary teachers. Relatively little research was identified on secondary English Language Arts teachers' reading habits. The research identified were case studies of a small number of teachers. No studies were identified that investigated the reading behaviors of ELA teachers in Texas. This was significant because Texas: (1) differs from other states in that it offers established alternative certification avenues for teachers (TEA, 2012; SBEC, 2012); (2) especially southern parts are reported as being among the least literate cities in the country (NCES, 2003); (3) schools have a large number of low socio-economic students with a high achievement gap between students based on socio-economic status

(Bickel, 1999); and (4) is one of five states that did not adopted the Common Core State Standards in the United States and designs its curriculum unlike any other state (CCSS, 2012; TEA, 2012).

Based upon the results of this study, future efforts could focus on determining the extent that ELA teachers share their reading habits with their students and what if any impact this has on students. Ideas/topics for future research studies related to this topic are as follows:

- Conduct a survey with an expanded number of teachers.
- Conduct personal interviews of ELA teachers in different socio economic or academically successful school districts.
- Expand this study to include all content areas at the secondary level and compare findings in this study with other content areas.
- Compare data sets for ELA teachers to the general populations of teachers.
- Duplicate this study in other states. For instance a comparison of teachers using the International Literacy Association (ILA) geographic regions in order to identify if there are regional differences.
- Conduct follow-up interviews for those that responded to this survey. This would add additional information on the reading habits of the teachers.

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Text Complexity and Informal Reading Inventories: A Metric Analysis of Narrative Reading Passages

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Abstract

Often regarded as useful diagnostic reading tools, commercial informal reading inventories (IRIs) have also received a fair amount of criticism regarding their reliability and validity. Using a new metric analysis, this study explored the validity of graded narrative passages across three IRIs with respect to measures of narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion. Findings revealed that graded narrative passages within and across forms for each IRI possessed inconsistent levels of text complexity, especially for referential and deep cohesion.

Introduction

For over 60 years, informal reading inventories (IRIs) have been recommended for diagnostic purposes to determine students' reading levels. Additionally, IRIs are used to assess students' decoding and comprehension abilities during oral and silent reading. Betts (1946) recommended teachers consider students' independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels in order to differentiate reading instruction. Smith (1963) believed using a series of leveled readers to ascertain students' instructional level was one of the best checks of students' word identification ability. Years later, Rupley & Blair (1979) recognized IRIs as the most widely used type of informal reading assessment and Zintz (1981) reported IRIs to be the most precise reading assessments available for determining a student's ability to read textbooks for instructional purposes. Similarly, Johns (1982) reported that IRIs were an excellent tool for matching students' reading ability with instructional materials. Twenty years later, Paris and Hoffman (2002) noted that IRIs were used in the past primarily for diagnostic purposes and recommended increasing the use of IRI scores for higher stakes testing purposes such as measuring reading growth and reporting annual progress.

Despite their robust history and reputation as one of the most used and accurate types of reading assessments for determining functional reading levels, IRIs also have received significant criticism over the years. McKenna (1983) highlighted several problematic issues with commercial IRIs including alternate form reliability, the effect of background knowledge on estimating accurate instructional reading levels, passage dependent question issues, and concerns for the validity of scoring criteria to establish independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels. Applegate, Quinn, Applegate (2002) investigated levels of thinking required across eight popular commercial IRIs. They found nearly two-thirds of the 900 questions employed across the assessments were written at the literal level and thus, only required readers to remember information directly stated in the text. Spector (2005) studied the technical rigor of nine commercial IRIs. She found several of the IRIs appeared to have sufficient reliability for making low stakes decisions, such as the selection of appropriate reading materials. However, for high stake decisions, such as the identification of reading difficulties, few of the IRIs she studied met sufficient reliability expectations. Additional key findings included poor documentation of statistical information and weak research methodologies for establishing sufficient reliability.

In a follow-up study, Nilsson (2013) explored whether IRIs had improved with regard to technical rigor issues associated with reliability since Spector's research. Additionally, for IRIs that reported reliability measures, she compared

their measures to the minimum criteria for reliability suggested by Nitko (2001) and Salvia and Ysseldyke (2004) for assessments used to make instructional decisions. Examining 11 commercial IRIs, Nilsson found only seven (63%) provided reliability estimates revealing "modest" improvement since Spector's findings. With regard to meeting minimum criteria for tests used to make instructional decisions, Nilsson tentatively reported, "conclusions drawn from IRI data should be viewed with caution" (p. 227).

In spite of serious shortcomings, IRIs continue to be recommended and used by teachers and reading specialists to estimate students' reading levels (Gillet, Temple, Temple, & Crawford, 2012; Gunning, 2014; Morris, 2014). Teachers and reading specialists accept the fact that the graded passages used for oral and silent reading are accurately leveled and correspond to materials at particular grade levels. For over 50 years, most commercial IRI test developers have relied on readability measures such as the Spache, Fry, Dale-Chall, and Flesh-Kincaid formulas to gauge text difficulty levels. These formulas calculate readability based on features such as word length, sentence length, number of sentences, and percent of difficult words based on word frequency lists. However, these formulas do not measure the relationships among sentences and paragraphs in text and cannot account for finer details that may cause difficulty in reading comprehension (Paris, 2014). Further, Graesser, McNamara, and Kulikowich (2011) suggest that text difficulty established from common readability formulas may not be sufficient when making diagnostic decisions with struggling readers. With new emphases on text complexity as it relates to the Common Core (CCSS, 2010), is it possible that text complexity issues associated with the graded passages in IRIs pose additional threats to overall test validity?

Text Complexity

Comprehension of text is more than simple recognition of words in sentences and involves identification of meaning within and across sentences. It requires the reader to retain coherent meanings in memory to make connections with the various pieces of information constantly encountered during reading. In addition, the comprehension process includes integration of the reader's prior knowledge thereby allowing for instant application and reflection (e.g., Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978).

Grasser, Dowell, and Moldovan (2011) collapsed 130 linguistic indices to five major dimensions that account for 54% of the variance in text. They based their research on analysis of a large body of Touchstone Applied Science Associates (TASA) comprising of over 37,000 books that students would likely

encounter in their K-12 schooling experience. These five dimensions of text complexity align with various language-discourse levels suggested in multilevel theoretical frameworks by Graesser and McNamara (2011) and Kintsch (1998).

To evaluate the five dimensions, Graesser, McNamara, and Kulikowich (2011) developed a teacher-friendly web-based assessment instrument referred to as *Coh-Metrix Common Core Text Ease and Readability Assessor* (T.E.R.A.). Each dimension is rated on a 0-100% scale. McNamara, Graesser, McCarthy, & Cai, (2014, pp. 97-98) defined the following text dimensions.

Narrativity. Narrative text tells a story, with characters, events, places, and things that are familiar to the reader. Narrative is closely affiliated with everyday, oral conversation. This robust component is highly affiliated with word familiarity, world knowledge, and oral language. Non-narrative texts on less familiar topics lie at the opposite end of the continuum.

Syntactic Simplicity. This component reflects the degree to which the sentences in the text contain fewer words and use simpler, familiar syntactic structures, which are less challenging to process. At the opposite end of the continuum are texts that contain sentences with more words and use complex, unfamiliar syntactic structures.

Word Concreteness. Texts that contain content words that are concrete, meaningful, and evoke mental images are easier to process and understand. Abstract words represent concepts that are difficult to represent visually. Texts that contain more abstract words are more challenging to understand.

Referential Cohesion. A text with high referential cohesion contains words and ideas that overlap across sentences and the entire text, forming explicit threads that connect the text for the reader. Low cohesion text is typically more difficult to process because there are fewer connections that tie the ideas together for the reader.

Deep Cohesion. This dimension reflects the degree to which the text contains causal and intentional connectives when there are causal and logical relationships within the text. These connectives help the reader to form a more coherent and deeper understanding of the causal events, processes, and actions in the text. When a text contains many relationships but does not contain connectives, then the reader must infer the relationships between the ideas in the text. If the text is high in deep cohesion, then those relationships and global cohesion are more explicit.

Purpose of the Study

While more recent studies focused primarily on reliability issues associated with commercial IRIs, the purpose of this study explored the five dimensions of text complexity across graded narrative passages of three highly recommended IRIs.

This is an important issue, because if the analysis of text complexity across graded passages in commercial IRIs reveals inconsistencies associated with factors that are known to affect comprehension, then the conclusions drawn from IRI data may not be accurate with regard to estimating students' reading levels.

Method

The three commercial IRIs selected for this study were chosen based on (1) their frequency of use by reading faculty in the graduate reading program, (2) their frequency of use by teachers in the local public schools, and (3) their attention to reliability and validity issues in the documentation. They were:

1. the *Basic Reading Inventory*, 11th Ed. (BRI), (Johns, 2012);
2. *The Flynt/Cooter Comprehensive Reading Inventory-2* (Cooter, Flynt, & Cooter, 2014); and
3. the *Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (QRI-5)* (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011).

Passages from Forms A, B, and C (PPP-Grade 8 narrative passages) from the *Basic Reading Inventory,* 11th ed. (BRI-11); Forms A and B (P-Level 9 narrative passages) from the *Flynt/Cooter Comprehensive Reading Inventory-2* (CRI-2); and the narrative passages for PP-Level 6 from the *Qualitative Reading Inventory-5* (QRI-5) were analyzed using *Coh-Metrix Common Core Text Ease and Readability Assessor* (T.E.R.A.). Percentages, ranging from 0-100 percent, were generated by T.E.R.A. for narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion for each passage across each form for all three IRIs. This data was transferred to an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. Data in the Excel spreadsheet was double checked for accuracy by a different member of the research team.

Charts depicting the percentages calculated by T.E.R.A. for each leveled narrative passage, across each form, and for each of the IRIs was constructed. Polynomial trend lines were generated for each chart to illuminate the overall similarities and differences between forms for each of the five dimensions.

The Euclidean distance was computed to statistically examine how similar or dissimilar the tests were across the five dimensions within each level and form.

This method addresses whether the IRI passages were similar within each form across instruments for each of the dimensions. Distance correlations were run to determine dissimilarity between the passages using an object-by-attribute. This distance measure is the most common use of distance and it is the best proximity measure when looking for similarities in data. In these indices, the closer the values are together, the more similar the tests are with regard to each dimension. Proximity matrices were generated based on dissimilarity.

Results

Percentages, ranging from 0-100%, for each of five dimensions of text complexity were generated for each graded narrative passage across each form for all three IRIs. Bar charts were developed to examine consistency between forms for each passage and consistency of trends within and across forms. First, the consistency across forms was examined with the assumption that different forms should reveal consistent levels across the five dimensions if forms were equivalent. Without equivalent forms, test-retest data could be compromised. Second, trends across passages for each form were examined. Polynomial trend lines were generated because the data significantly fluctuates across each of the five dimensions within each form.

Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 2012).   Forms A, B, and C (PPP-Grade 8 narrative passages) were analyzed from the BRI-11. Figures A1-A5 show the text complexity percentages of the passages for each form on each of the five dimensions measured.

For narrativity (See Figure A1), Forms A and C reveal much more consistency across passages than Form B. Form B narrativity runs significantly higher than Forms A and C on a majority of passages. Trend-wise, with the exception of the PPP passage, narrativity tends to decrease as the text difficulty increases,
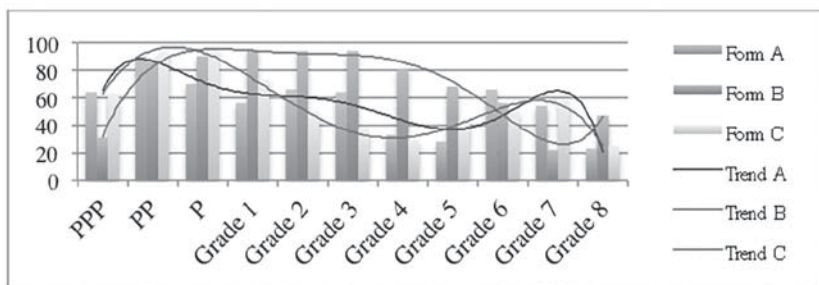
Figure A1. Narrativity Percentages.

with the exception of Form B. For Grades 1-5 and 7-8 passages, Form B percentages for narrativity are notably different compared to Forms A and C.

For syntactic simplicity (See Figure A2), Forms A, B, and C reveal a high degree of consistency, with the exception of Form C on the PP-P passages. Trendwise, syntactic simplicity remains relatively high for Forms A, B, and C and begins to decrease notably on the Grade 6 passage.

For word concreteness (See Figure A3), Forms A, B, and C again reveal a high degree of consistency. Trend-wise, word concreteness remains notably high for Forms A, B, and C, except for the PP-Grade 1 passages and significantly dips on Form C on the Grade 8 passage.

For referential cohesion (See Figure A4), consistency across all three forms is seen only on the PPP and Grade 3 passages. Trend-wise, Forms A, B, and C reveal high referential cohesion in the PPP through Grade 2 levels and notably lower referential cohesion on the Grade 5-8 levels, noting spikes in Form C on the Grade 7 passage and in Form A on the Grade 7-8 passages.
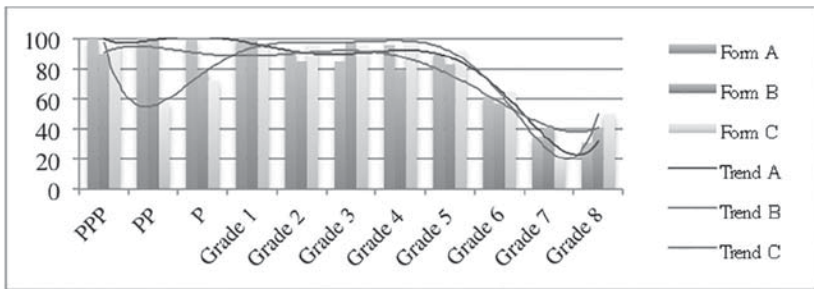
Figure A2. Syntactic simplicity percentages.
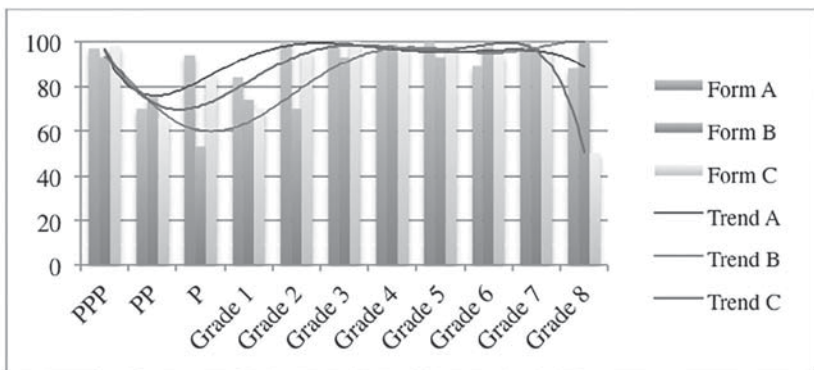
Figure A3. Word concreteness percentages.
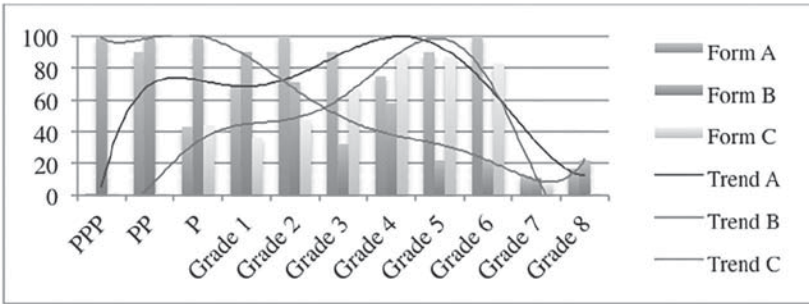
Figure A4. Referential comprehension percentages.
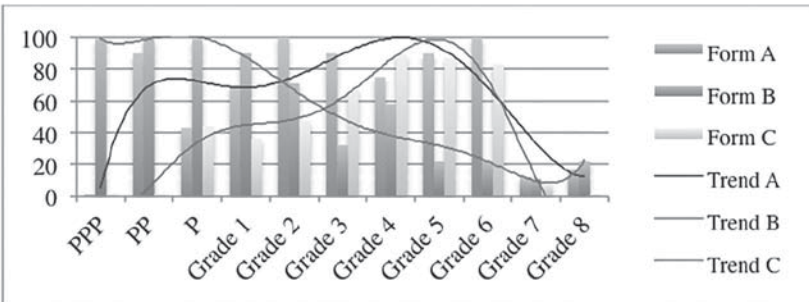
Figure A5. Deep cohesion percentages.

For deep cohesion (See Form A5), very little consistency exits between Forms A, B, and C. Likewise, the level of deep cohesion appears to drop notably on Grade 7 and 8 passages. Inconsistencies between passages in Forms A, B, and C, reveal opposing trend lines for Form B compared to Forms A and C.

The Flynt/Cooter Comprehensive Reading Inventory-2 (Cooter, Flynt, & Cooter, 2014).   Forms A and B (P-Level 9 narrative passages) were analyzed from the CRI-2. Figures B1-B5 show the text complexity percentages of the passages for each form on each of the five dimensions measured.

For narrativity (See Figure B1), Forms A and B reveal consistency for Levels 1, 3, 4, 7, and 8 passages. Inconsistencies between Forms A and B exist for Levels 5, 6, and 9 passages. Trend-wise, Form A and Form B have nearly opposite trends except where they cross or nearly cross on Levels 1, 3, and 8.

For syntactic simplicity (See Figure B2), there is more consistency between Forms A and B on Levels 1-3 and 7-9. Inconsistencies exist for Levels P, 5 and 6.
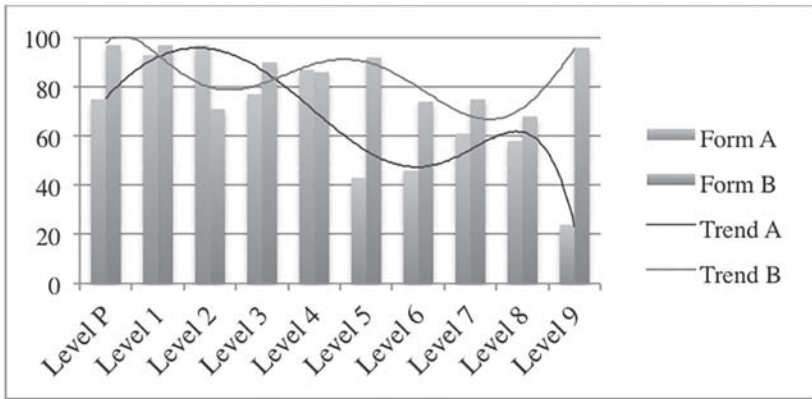
Figure B1. Narrativity percentages.
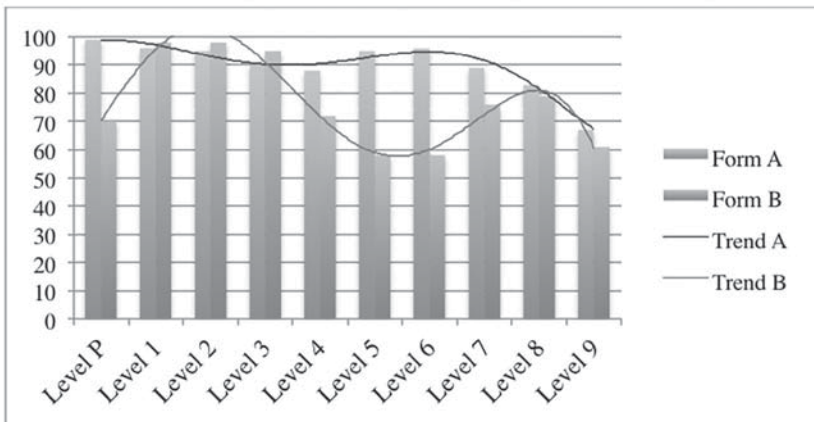
Figure B2. Syntactic simplicity percentages.

Trend-wise, syntactic simplicity remains relatively high on Form A with Form B notably lower on Levels P and 5-6.

For word concreteness (See Figure B3), Forms A and B reveal consistency on Levels P, 4-5, and 8-9. Large inconsistencies exist with Levels 1 and 6. Trend-wise, Form A reveals more subtle fluctuation than Form B for word concreteness.

For referential cohesion (See Figure B4), very little consistency exists between Forms A and B. Levels 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7 exhibit large inconsistencies.
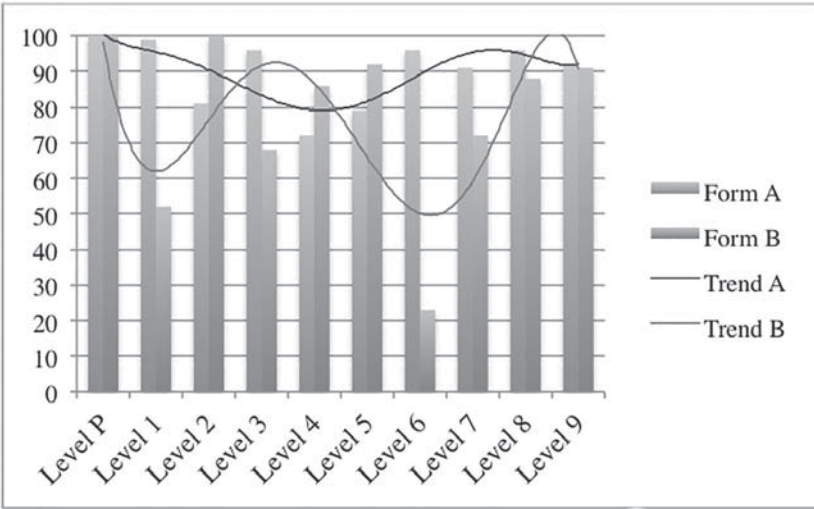
Figure B3. Word concreteness percentages.
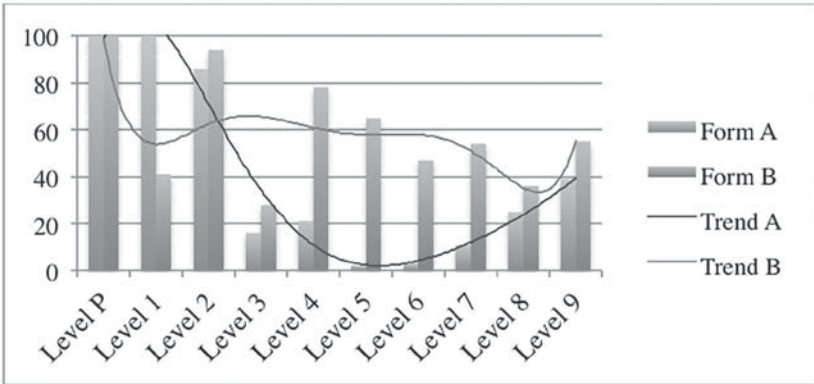
Figure B4. Referential cohesion percentages.

Trend-wise, Form B runs notably higher than Form A as the trends separate by Level 1 and Form A takes a sharp drop from Levels 3 to 7.

For deep cohesion (See Figure B5), there is again very little consistency between Forms A and B. With the exception of Level 1, all levels show inconsistencies. Further, trend lines for Forms A and B are mostly opposing on Levels 4-8.
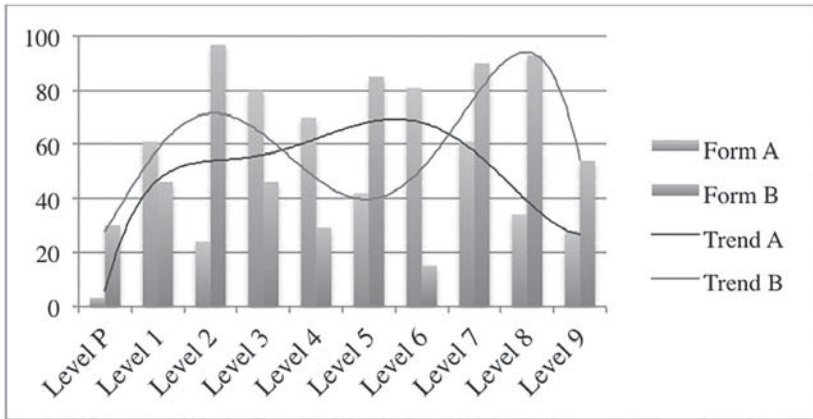
Figure B5. Deep cohesion percentages.
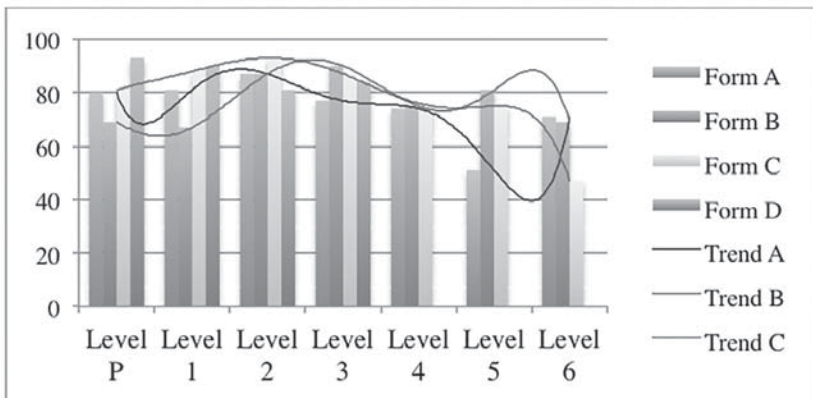
Figure C1. Narrativity percentages.

Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011).   Multiple passages at the P-6 levels were analyzed from the QRI-5. Figures C1-C5 show the text complexity percentages of the passages for each form on each of the five dimensions measured.

Except for Level 5-6 passages, narrativity (See Figure C1) was relatively consistent across passages. Trend-wise, narrativity remained moderately high until decreasing significantly for Levels 5 and 6 on Form A and C respectively. From Level 5 to Level 6, Forms A and B appear to fluctuate in opposing patterns. (Note: No trend line generated for Form D since there is no Form D for Levels 4-6.)
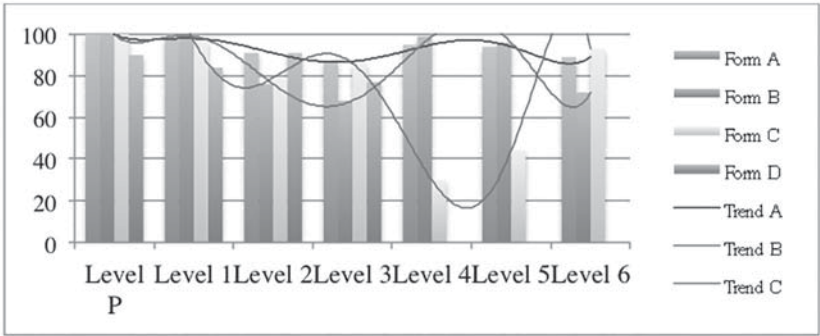
Figure C2. Syntactic simplicity percentages.
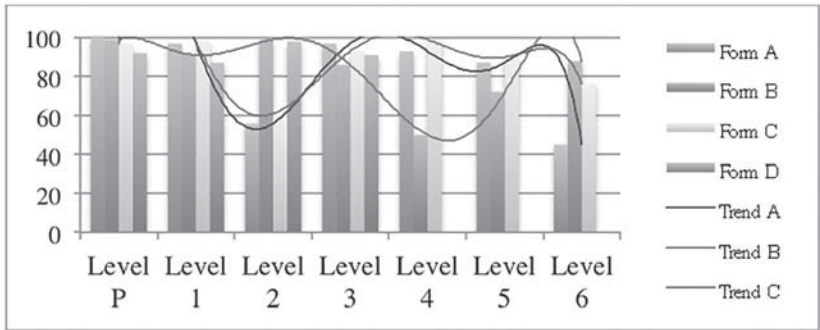
Figure C3. Word concreteness percentages.

For syntactic simplicity (See Figure C2), Levels P-3 and 6 show good consistency. Beyond Level 3, Form C decreases notably for Levels 4-5. Trend-wise, syntactic simplicity remains high across a majority of the levels except for Form C on Levels 4-5. (Note: No trend line generated for Form D since there is no Form D for Levels 4-6.)

For word concreteness (See Figure C3), percentages remain relatively high across all levels and forms, noting large decreases on Level 2 and Level 6, Form A and on Level 4, Form B. Trend-wise, word concreteness for Forms A and C reveal opposing trends, noting similarities on Levels 1, 3, and 5. (Note: No trend line generated for Form D since there is no Form D for Levels 4-6.)

Consistency in referential cohesion (See Figure C4) for forms within levels and across leveled passages revealed notable differences. Only level 3 revealed consistency across forms. Trend-wise, referential cohesion across forms was again erratic. (Note: No trend line generated for Form D since there is no Form D for Levels 4-6.)
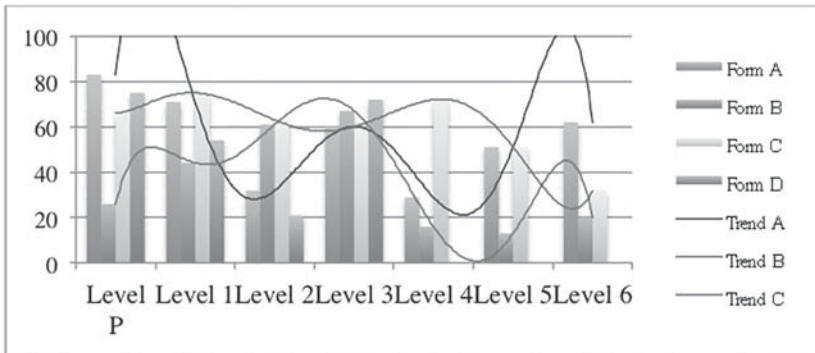
Figure C4. Referential cohesion percentages.
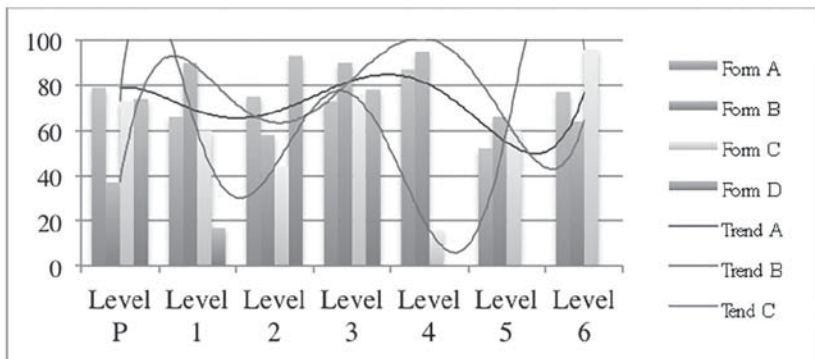
Figure C5. Deep cohesion percentages.

For deep cohesion (See Figure C5), consistency for forms within levels and across leveled passages again revealed significant differences. Trend-wise, levels of deep cohesion were erratic across and within leveled passages, revealing opposing trend lines between Form C and Forms A and B. (Note: No trend line generated for Form D since there is no Form D for Levels 4-6.)

To statistically examine the dissimilarities between the three IRIs across the five dimensions, Euclidean Distance correlations were calculated for each dimension. To ensure there was no missing data for these calculations, correlations were limited to analysis of Forms A & B, levels/grades P-6, for each IRI. Tables 1–5 present these findings. (For Tables 1-5, the BRI-11 is referenced as 1, the CRI-*2* as 2, and the QRI-5 is referenced as 3.)

TABLE 1
Proximity Matrix – Narrativity *d* = *41.52*

	Euclidean Distance		
	1	2	3
1	.00	72.34	87.10
2	72.34	.00	57.74
3	87.10	57.74	.00

TABLE 2
Proximity Matrix – Syntactic Simplicity *d* = *29.22*

	Euclidean Distance		
	1	2	3
1	.00	54.52	47.25
2	54.52	.00	67.91
3	47.25	67.91	.00

TABLE 3
Proximity Matrix – Word Concreteness *d* = *1.40*

	Euclidean Distance		
	1	2	3
1	.00	102.47	108.24
2	102.47	.00	107.25
3	108.24	107.25	.00

TABLE 4
Proximity Matrix – Referential Cohesion *d* = 49.91

	Euclidean Distance		
	1	2	3
1	.00	152.37	129.93
2	152.37	.00	165.22
3	129.93	165.22	.00

TABLE 5
Proximity Matrix – Deep Cohesion *d* = *23.72*

	Euclidean Distance		
	1	**2**	**3**
1	.00	129.57	150.58
2	129.57	.00	146.34
3	150.58	146.34	.00

For Euclidean distance, *d approaching* 0 indicates a high degree of similarity (Barrett, 2006); with *d = 0*, the text complexity factor under scrutiny would be statistically identical across the three IRIs. Since all the percentages for the data range between 0 and 100, we can inversely assume that values closer to 100 would indicate a high degree of dissimilarity. For narrativity, *d* = *41.52* indicates moderate dissimilarity. For syntactic simplicity, *d* = *29.22* indicates moderate dissimilarity. For word concreteness, *d* = *1.40* indicates strong similarity between the three IRIs. For referential cohesion, *d* = *49.91* indicates moderate dissimilarity. For deep cohesion, *d* = *23.72* indicates moderate dissimilarity.

Overall, the large distance between values for narrativity, syntactic simplicity, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion support the inconsistencies revealed in Figures A1-A5, B1-B5, and C1-C5 within and across passages for all three IRIs. Word concreteness is the only dimension where the disparity between the values is diminished indicating a strong degree of similarity between the three IRIs.

Discussion

When the five dimensions of text complexity were examined in narrative passages for the BRI-11, CRI-2, and QRI-5, numerous inconsistencies, between forms and across graded passages for each form, were revealed for narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion. Largest inconsistencies were found for referential and deep cohesion.

Narrativity percentages should be consistently high in early reading texts with a slight decrease in more difficult narrative texts (MacGinitie & Tretiak, 1971; Mäkinen, Loukusa, Nieminen, Leinonen, & Kunnari, 2013; McNamara et. al., 2014). Only the QRI-5 revealed consistent high percentages for narrativity with a slight decrease in more difficult texts. Inconsistent percentages for narrativity were found for the BRI-11 and CRI-2 within levels and across forms (See Figures A1 and B1.). When narrative passages differ dramatically in their percentage of narrativity, the probability that the task for the reader is equivalent

from one graded text to the next more difficult text is questionable. Likewise, if the percentage of narrativity across forms for equivalent passages differs dramatically, then test-retest equivalency could be compromised.

Syntactic simplicity percentages should be consistently high in early reading texts with a slight decrease in more difficult narrative texts (MacGinitie & Tretiak, 1971; Mäkinen et al., 2013; McNamara et. al., 2014). Overall, the BRI-11 performed well with regard to syntactic simplicity. However, only Form A of the CRI-2 and Levels P-3 of the QRI-5 revealed the expected trend (See Figure A2, B2, and C2.). With large differences across forms for the CRI-2 and QRI-5, the probability that the task for the reader is equivalent from one graded text to the next more difficult text is questionable. In addition, test-retest equivalency also has potential to be compromised.

Word concreteness percentages also should be consistently high in early reading texts with a slight decrease in more difficult narrative texts (MacGinitie & Tretiak, 1971; Mäkinen et al., 2013; McNamara et. al., 2014). The QRI-5 revealed high percentages across P-1 levels, but inconsistent percentages on the remaining more difficult levels. The BRI-11 revealed lower percentages of word concreteness in the lower levels and very high percentages on the remaining more difficult levels with no decrease. Results for the CRI-2 were inconsistent within levels and across forms (See Figures A3, B3, and C3.). Thus, lack of consistency across and within all three IRIs means that the difficulty level associated with word concreteness does not increase gradually, nor does it remain consistent. Again, the probability that the task for the reader has remained consistent across passages within forms and across forms comes into question.

Referential cohesion helps readers make connections and enables readers with low prior knowledge and vocabulary to have better reading comprehension. Percentages for referential cohesion tend to be higher at the early reading texts and decrease as texts increase with difficulty (McNamara et. al., 2014). Forms B and C across PP-6 passages revealed a similar trend for the BRI. Only Form B, with the exception of Levels 1 and 3 for the CRI revealed a high to low trend. Results for referential cohesion for the QRI-5 were mostly inconsistent for referential cohesion (See Figures A4, B4, and C4.). Thus, erratic increases or decreases from one passage to the next have the potential to create unintended comprehension demands on the reader. Likewise, when equivalent forms exhibit large differences in the percent of referential cohesion, test-retest equivalency could be compromised.

Percentages for deep cohesion are typically lower in the early reading texts and increase in higher level texts as the need for syntactic simplicity decreases.

Higher deep cohesion in more difficult text may aid the reader's ability to comprehend (McNamara et. al., 2014). Only Form C, Levels PP-6 in the BRI-11, exhibited low deep cohesion percentages in the lower leveled passages with gradual increases in more difficult passages. Both the QRI-5 and CRI-2 revealed major inconsistencies for deep cohesion (See Figures A5, B5, and C5). Similar to the results for referential cohesion, erratic differences in graded passages within and across forms have the potential to create unintended comprehension demands on the reader as well as impact test-retest equivalency issues.

Summary

In the past decade, major criticisms of IRIs have focused on mostly reliability issues and question the conclusions drawn from these highly recommended assessments. Recognizing that characteristics of text influence comprehension (Linderholm, Everson, van den Broek, Mischinski, Crittenden, & Samuels, 2000; McNamera & Kintsch, 1996), this study analyzed IRI narrative passages from three highly recommended commercial IRIs exploring the five dimensions of text complexity.

Data revealed that alternate forms of leveled narrative passages across three commercial IRIs were inconsistent as well as statistically dissimilar with regard to narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion. Moreover, McNamera et.al (2014) warn that erratic differences in referential cohesion and deep cohesion between passages could create significantly different comprehension demands on the reader and thus, impact their performance. As a result, estimated reading levels derived from students' oral and silent reading comprehension performances from IRIs may not be as accurate a measure as once thought. Consequently, there is need for further investigation into the relationship between text complexity and graded narrative passages in IRIs.

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Bridging Cultures Through Literacy: Impacting Adult Learners

Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategy Use of Korean ESL University Students

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Abstract

This study investigated the metacognitive awareness of reading strategy use of Korean ESL university students enrolled in a university in the southwest region of the United States. It examined the relationship between the participant's reading strategy use and their English proficiency. The study found the participants utilized various strategies and reported high use of the strategies. Students with advanced English proficiency reported more frequent reading strategy usage than students with less proficiency although the difference was not statistically significant.

The opportunities afforded through study abroad programs can provide distinct benefits and challenges. For instance, becoming proficient in a foreign language by learning and communicating content in that target language and practicing oral language with native speakers are obvious benefits, but many times study-abroad students face challenges. Those challenges can include social adjustment to a new culture as well as academic difficulties, which are usually led by individuals' cultural and language differences, foreign language proficiency level, learning styles, and academic skills (Neito & Booth, 2010). The international students who come to America are expected to have proficient English

language skills in order for them to manage and understand course reading materials and thus garner success. However reading, including reading strategy usage and thus comprehending academic materials, can be a very demanding task.

Research in literacy has consistently established that reading is an engaging and cognitive process of meaning construction (Aloqaili, 2012; Yu-hui, Li-rong, & Yue, 2010). The language(s) and thinking practices of the reader are the underpinnings of meaning production which leads to understanding of the material (Barnett, 1989; Snow, 2002). Reading in one's first language (L1) requires proficiencies, strategies, and practices to enhance the comprehension of what is being read (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). For readers of a second language (L2), the skills, strategies, and processes needed for L1 reading comprehension are the same as those needed for attaining L2 literacy (Brisbois, 1995; Paul, 1996). While the skills and strategies necessitated for L2 reading are often the same as those for L1 reading, the process of constructing meaning in L2 can be more multifaceted and exigent (Anderson, 1999; Bernhardt, 1993; Koda, 2005). This reading adeptness for learners of English is paramount for achievement in academic settings, including those seeking a higher education (Fotovatian & Shokrpour, 2007; Li & Wang, 2010; Xu, 1999; Zhang, & Wu, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

To date, little research dealing with Korean university students learning English as a second language (ESL) and attending an American university is available. It is very important for instructors at American universities to be aware of possible challenges or difficulties in comprehending academic materials the international students may encounter. In order to provide an insight into the English language learners' (ELLs) thinking and learning behaviors, the current study attempted to investigate the metacognitive awareness of reading strategy use of Korean ESL university students, any changes in their strategy use, and the association of this use and self-rated English adeptness over the course of a semester. Such attention to students' needs can also lead to more successful academic and social adjustment in America. The following research questions were explored in order to fulfill the objectives of the current study:

1. What reading strategies do Korean ESL university students use when completing course readings while attending an American university?

2. What changes in the use of reading strategies, if any, are reported by the Korean university students over the course of the semester?

3. What is the relationship between the Korean students' reading strategy use and their self-rated English proficiency?

Literature Review

English as Foreign Language Learners

There is often a strong aspiration to learn English for speakers of other languages (Oxford Royal Academy, 2014). This goal can stem from a multitude of conditions including: English is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world and in the context of this (1) English can often open up more communication opportunities, (2) English proficiency is a desirable skill to employers, (3) English can provide more understandable interactions with popular culture including movies, television, music, magazines, and technology resources, (4) 55% of the world's webpages are written in English which can allow persons to acquire more of the world's intellectual capital, (5) English is frequently regarded as the language of higher education and, as an example, it is estimated that 95% of scientific articles are written in English (Oxford Royal Academy, 2014).An emerging segment of this diverse population is university students attaining English as a second language (ESL). According to the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL, 2014) eight hundred thousand international students studied at U.S. colleges and universities during the 2012-2013 school year. In the 2013-2014 school year this number increased to nearly nine hundred thousand with the top three countries of China, India, and South Korea (in that order) sending nearly 50% of all international students to the United States for an education. These international students contributed to university admissions growth in forty-one states, with eighteen states growing at a faster rate than the national increase of eight percent from 2012-2013 to 2013-2014. International students attending these universities engage in all aspects of the English language: listening, speaking, reading and writing, in an effort to gain educational success (Institute of International Education, 2014).

Metacognition and Reading Strategy Use

According to The Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy (TEAL, 2010), metacognition is the capability to use previous knowledge to devise a strategy for (1) approaching a learning task, (2) taking necessary steps to problem solve, (3) reflecting on results, (4) evaluating the results, and (5) modifying the approach as needed. In the context of reading, metacognition is often referred to as the knowledge a reader holds about their understanding during reading, this cognition helps a reader examine their reading processes and knowingly change or adjust their strategic approach to the reading as needed. All this is done to advance their understanding (Carrell, Gajusek, & Wise, 1998; TEAL, 2010). Therefore the awareness, understanding, and monitoring of one's reading processes are fundamentally important properties of proficient reading (Hong-Nam

& Page, 2014b). The metacognitive awareness, understanding, and monitoring during reading and thus reading strategy usage distinguishes between adept and novice readers, and can promote comprehension (Carell, et al., 1998).

Research studies on English language learners (ELLs) readers' metacognitive awareness and their usage of reading strategies reveal that more efficacious readers exhibit more competent strategy usage. These actions indicate an affirmative association between L2 reading skills and the level of English proficiency (Hong-Nam & Page, 2014a; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2004; Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002; Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001). Proficient L2 readers tend to know when and where to use particular reading strategies and know how and why to use specific reading strategies (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2007b; Hong-Nam & Page, 2014b). For instance, EFL Korean university students with advanced reading proficiency in Hong-Nam & Page's (2014b) study reported using more reading strategies than the beginning and intermediate groups. The study of bilingual Korean-Chinese university students in China also reported the similar findings (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2007b). The students with advanced English language proficiency tended to use reading strategies more frequently than other groups. This was in contrast to less proficient readers (Paris & Wignograd, 1990; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Accordingly, it is imperative for L2 readers, and especially those in academic settings, to be cognizant of the reading strategies available and to use these strategies in the context of advance reading comprehension.

To date, the majority of studies on readers' metacognitive awareness of reading strategy use have examined monolinguals or EFL readers' awareness and use of strategies. Little research dealing with Korean ESL university students learning English as a second language and enrolled in an American university is available. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the metacognitive awareness of reading strategy usage of Korean ESL university students and the relationship between their strategy use and English proficiency.

Method

Participants

The participants in the current study were 107 Korean university students enrolled in a university in the southwest US. Prior to their enrollment in the US university, they attended a Korean university and completed one year of an intensive English language program before they came to the participating university. The participants consisted of 62 male students and 45 female students majoring in various disciplines. The majority was classified as freshmen (79) with 28 sophomores. They completed the survey during their first semester in the US

and the majority was taking a minimum of 12 credit hours of general college courses or courses related to their major. When asked to rate their overall English proficiency, 17% considered themselves beginners, while 73% considered themselves to be intermediate English learners and 10% to be advanced.

Instrument

This study employed a pre-and post-survey approach using the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002) which contained 30 items measuring the metacognitive awareness of reading strategy use of English language learners. The items were grouped into three areas: Global Reading strategies (13 items) for measuring intentional and planned techniques for monitoring or managing reading, Problem Solving strategies (8 items) for assessing localized and focused actions like working directly with context to understand textual information, and Support strategies (9 items) for basic support techniques to improve reading comprehension. The SORS is a self-report questionnaire and uses a five-point Likert-scale to rate each strategy ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = I never or almost never do this, 2 = I do this only occasionally, 3 = I sometimes do this, 4 = I usually do this, and 5 = always or almost always do this).

Data Collection and Analysis

The SORS data was collected twice in order to determine any changes in strategy use over the course of their first semester: one at the beginning of semester as a pre-survey and the second one at the end of semester as a post-survey. The questionnaire was administrated through the freshman success course all freshmen students were required to take during the first semester at the university. The freshman success course prepared new students for optimal success at the university by supporting them to develop skills, knowledge, and behaviors that would help them become more confident learners. University faculty from different disciplines taught this course, which included of a variety of learning materials (e.g., novel, magazine, or the Internet resources) and activities such as presentation, discussion, classroom activities and interactions. The students were informed of the confidentiality procedures and were notified that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The questionnaire was administered and collected by the class instructors and returned to the researchers for data analysis.

Several statistical techniques were used for data analyses. Descriptive statistics were calculated for summarizing demographic information and describing students' overall strategy use. A Paired *t*-test was computed to determine if there

were any changes in use of reading strategy after 16 weeks. An ANOVA was used for exploring a statistically difference in reading strategy use between English language proficiency levels.

Results

The current study attempts to investigate reading strategy use by Korean ESL university students attending an American university and any changes in their strategy use over the course of a semester. It also examines the differences in reading strategy use among self-rated English proficiency levels. The following sections report the results of data analysis from the SORS by research questions.

Research Question 1: What reading strategies do Korean ESL university students use when completing course readings while attending an American university?

Table 1 presents the results of descriptive statistics for overall strategy use by the participants. The table shows that Korean ESL university students reported using various reading strategies and high use of the reading strategies (Pre, $M = 3.56$; Post, $M = 3.68$). The results of a Paired t test revealed that statistically significant differences in reading strategy use over the course of the semester ($t = -1.74$, $p = 0.08$) at $p < 0.1$ level.

When looking at the use of each strategy category, Problem Solving strategies were most used by the participants (Pre, $M = 3.87$; Post, $M = 3.84$) followed by Global Reading strategies (Pre, $M = 3.53$; Post, $M = 3.66$) and then Support strategies (Pre, $M = 3.34$; Post, $M = 3.56$). The Paired t-test revealed a

TABLE 1
Summary of Overall Strategy Use and Paired t-tests between Pre and Post Survey

Variable	Survey	M	S.D.	t	Df	p^*
Global Reading Strategies	Pre	3.53	0.21	−1.87	107	0.06
	Post	3.66	0.32			
Problem Solving Strategies	Pre	3.87	0.27	0.32	107	0.67
	Post	3.84	0.36			
Support Strategies	Pre	3.34	0.30	−2.77	107	0.00
	Post	3.56	0.38			
Total	Pre	3.56	0.18	−1.74	107	0.08
	Post	3.68	0.29			

* $p < 0.1$ (2-tailed test)

statistically significant difference in use of two categories at $p < 0.1$ level between pre-and post-survey: Global Reading strategies ($t = –1.87$, $p = 0.06$) and Support strategies ($t = –2.77$, $p = 0.00$). No statistically significant difference in use of Problem Solving strategies was found although Problem Solving strategies were most preferred among three categories.

Research Question 2: What changes in the use of reading strategies, if any, are reported by the Korean university students over the course of the semester?

Table 2 displays the results of descriptive statistics and Paired *t*-test of individual items on the SORS in descending order from most preferred to least preferred. As shown in the table, the most preferred strategy was under Support strategies (SS6) "I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it" (Pre, $M = 4.15$; Post, $M = 4.05$). This was followed by one of the Global Reading strategies (GS7), "I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding" (Pre, $M = 4.07$; Post, $M = 4.04$) and a Problem Solving strategy (PS8), "When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases" (Pre, $M = 4.04$; Post, $M = 3.94$).

Table 2 also presents the least preferred strategy group, which included many Support strategies. The least preferred strategy reported by the participants was Support strategies 2 (SS2), "When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read" (Pre, $M = 2.54$; Post, $M = 2.93$) followed by a Global Reading strategy (GS10), "I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text" (Pre, $M = 2.64$; Post, $M = 2.99$) and a Support strategy (SS7), "I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text" (Pre, $M = 2.87$; Post, $M = 3.46$). Among top ten preferred strategies reported by these participants, six were Problem Solving strategies (PS8, PS7, PS4, PS5, PS6, and PS3), two were Global Reading strategies (GS7 and GS8), and one was Support strategy (SS6). The results of the study revealed the Korean ESL university students' preference for Problem Solving strategies, indicating the participants tended to use strategies involving analyzing or working directly with text or information presented in text.

When looking at the difference in each strategy use between pre- and post-survey, the participants reported more frequent use of eight reading strategies out of 30 after 16 weeks. As shown in Table 2, there was a statistically significant difference in use of the following four Global Reading strategies and four Support strategies: "I use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information (GS9)" ($t = –2.13$, $p = 0.03$), "When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore (GS6)" ($t = –2.47$, $p = 0.01$), "I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose (GS4)" ($t = –2.16$, $p = 0.03$), "I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text (GS10)" ($t = –2.57$,

TABLE 2
Preferences of Reading Strategies and Summary t-test of Individual Reading Strategy on the SORS

Rank	Item	Description		M	SD	T	P
1	SS6	I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.	Pre	4.15	0.66	0.82	0.42
			Post	4.05	0.75		
2	GS7	I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding.	Pre	4.07	0.68	0.23	0.82
			Post	4.04	0.89		
3	PS8	When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	Pre	4.04	0.58	0.86	0.39
			Post	3.94	0.67		
4	PS7	When text becomes difficult, I re-read it to increase my understanding.	Pre	3.97	0.82	−1.01	0.31
			Post	4.10	0.98		
5	GS8	I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading.	Pre	3.94	0.75	−0.16	0.87
			Post	3.96	0.68		
6	PS4	When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading.	Pre	3.94	1.10	1.23	0.22
			Post	3.76	1.14		
7	GS11	I check my understanding when I come across new information.	Pre	3.93	0.64	−0.08	0.94
			Post	3.94	0.76		
8	PS5	I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading.	Pre	3.93	0.83	0.92	0.36
			Post	3.80	1.03		
9	PS6	I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read.	Pre	3.91	0.82	−0.08	0.94
			Post	3.92	0.83		
10	PS3	I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading.	Pre	3.82	0.81	0.28	0.77
			Post	3.78	1.00		
11	SS3	I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.	Pre	3.76	1.51	−0.35	0.72
			Post	3.81	1.21		
12	PS2	I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	Pre	3.74	0.84	0.73	0.46
			Post	3.64	1.27		
13	SS4	I use reference materials (e.g., a dictionary) to help me understand what I read.	Pre	3.72	1.24	−0.37	0.71
			Post	3.78	1.19		

Rank	Item	Description		*M*	SD	*T*	*P*
14	GS13	I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	Pre	3.64	0.88	0.61	0.54
			Post	3.55	1.14		
15	GS5	I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organization.	Pre	3.64	1.10	−1.15	0.25
			Post	3.79	0.94		
16	GS3	I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it.	Pre	3.63	1.16	−0.59	0.55
			Post	3.71	1.00		
17	PS1	I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading.	Pre	3.61	1.01	−0.99	0.32
			Post	3.74	0.84		
18	GS9	I use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information.	Pre	3.59	1.09	−2.13	0.03
			Post	3.88	0.88		
19	SS9	When reading, I think about information in English and Korean	Pre	3.58	1.02	−0.60	0.55
			Post	3.66	1.07		
20	GS2	I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	Pre	3.48	0.88	−0.74	0.46
			Post	3.57	0.81		
21	GS12	I try to guess what the content of the text is about when I read.	Pre	3.43	0.95	−1.12	0.26
			Post	3.59	1.21		
22	GS1	I have a purpose in mind when I read.	Pre	3.41	0.73	0.07	0.94
			Post	3.40	1.05		
23	GS6	When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.	Pre	3.31	1.16	−2.47	0.01
			Post	3.67	1.17		
24	SS5	I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	Pre	3.23	1.18	−3.08	0.00
			Post	3.69	1.29		
25	SS8	When reading, I translate from English into Korean.	Pre	3.21	1.15	−1.20	0.23
			Post	3.40	1.43		
26	GS4	I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	Pre	3.13	1.09	−2.16	0.03
			Post	3.44	1.08		
27	SS1	I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.	Pre	3.03	1.12	−1.79	0.07
			Post	3.29	1.13		

(Continued)

TABLE 2
Preferences of Reading Strategies and Summary t-test of Individual Reading Strategy on the SORS (*Continued*)

Rank	Item	Description		*M*	SD	*T*	*P*
28	SS7	I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text.	Pre	2.87	1.13	3.74	0.00
			Post	3.46	1.51		
29	GS10	I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.	Pre	2.64	0.95	−2.57	0.01
			Post	2.99	0.99		
30	SS2	When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	Pre	2.54	1.33	−2.38	0.02
			Post	2.93	1.45		

Note. GS = Global Reading strategies; PS = Problem Solving strategies; SS = Support strategies

*$p<0.1$ (2-tailed test)

$p = 0.01$), "I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read (SS5)" ($t = −3.08$, $p = 0.00$), "I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read (SS1)" ($t = −1.79$, $p = 0.07$), and "When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read (SS2)" ($t = −2.38$, $p = 0.02$). Interestingly, although the Korean ESL university students indicated they did not prefer to use those strategies, the results of the survey showed their use of the eight strategies significantly increased over the course of the semester.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between the Korean students' reading strategy use and their self-rated English proficiency?

The current study also looked at the relationship between reading strategy use and self-rated English proficiency. As seen in Table 3, mean scores showed frequent strategy use of students at the advanced level (Beginning, $M = 3.61$; Intermediate, $M = 3.55$; Advanced, $M = 3.76$)although the ANOVA test revealed no statistically significant difference in strategy use among self-rated English proficiency levels ($F = 2.42$, $p = 0.11$).

Discussion and Conclusion

Since little research exploring Korean ESL university students' use of reading strategies while attending a US university has been done, this study contributes to fulfilling the need for greater knowledge on this topic. In order to provide

TABLE 3
Summary of Use of Reading Strategies for Self-Rated English Proficiency

Variable	Beginning (n = 18)		Intermediate (n = 78)		Advanced (n = 11)		*F*	Sig.	Difference*
	M	SD	*M*	SD	*M*	SD			
Global	3.50	0.62	3.50	0.42	3.73	0.43	1.20	0.30	–
Problem Solving	3.83	0.56	3.89	0.49	4.07	0.62	0.92	0.40	–
Support	3.50	0.52	3.29	0.54	3.50	0.62	1.64	0.20	–
Total	3.61	0.58	3.55	0.54	3.76	0.60	2.42	0.11	–

Note. Global = Global Reading strategies, Problem Solving = Problem Solving strategies, Support = Support strategies

* *p*< 0.05 (Scheffé post-hoc test)

an insight into the students' thinking and learning behaviors, we investigated the metacognitive awareness of reading strategy use of Korean ESL university students during the course of their first semester attending a US university. Additionally, we analyzed any changes and differences in their strategy use from the beginning of the semester to the end of the semester.

Previous studies indicated a greater preference for Problem Solving strategies, or cognitive strategies by English language learners (Hong-Nam & Page, 2014a, b; Malcolm, 2009; Sheory & Baboczky, 2008; Sheorey, Kamimura, & Freiermuth, 2008). This study corroborates previous findings. Using self-reported survey data, Korean ESL university students in this study frequently used a variety of reading strategies. The most used strategies included Problem Solving strategies, followed by Global Reading strategies and Support strategies. This study also revealed that Korean ESL university students reported active interaction with text and frequent use of cognitive strategies such as making predictions and visualizing when reading academic materials. Past research indicates that skillful and mature readers are more knowledgeable of cognitive strategies and exhibit metacognitive control of certain strategies (Pressley, 2000). Students learning English also benefit from use of cognitive strategies, which can be very significant to the development of their literacy and language skills (Vaughn & Klinger, 2004).

The Korean students in this study were surveyed during their first semester in American university. Managing the large volume of reading load and comprehending complex academic materials can be very challenging for ESL students. As an ESL college student, it would be natural to employ certain strategies

consciously or unconsciously to support reading comprehension and work closely with texts. In order to construct meaning while reading, the participants in this study reported that they tended to use cogitative strategies more, such as paying closer attention, guessing the meaning of unknown words, visualizing information, adjusting reading speed and re-reading the texts when the text becomes difficult to understand.

Korean ESL university students also reported their disfavor of certain reading strategies such as reading aloud (SS2), critically analyzing and evaluating the information (GS10), asking themselves questions while reading (SS7), paraphrasing (SS5), and taking a note while reading (SS1). Interestingly, although those strategies were less preferred by the participants, the use of those strategies significantly increased over the course of the semester. As mentioned above, successful readers are strategic and metacognitively select and use certain strategies that are appropriate for reading tasks (Olson & Land, 2007). The Korean students may have found those strategies useful or helpful when reading and strategically and purposely used the strategies often over the course of the semester.

Differences in reading strategy use among English language proficiency levels have been reported by previous research. The consensus of the research suggests ELLs with more advanced English proficiency tended to employ more strategies than ELLs with beginning or intermediate English proficiency (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2007a; Phakiti, 2003). This study supports past findings. Mean scores indicated Korean students at advanced levels reported using more reading strategies than did students at less proficient levels although the differences in strategy use were not statistically significant.

The study findings bring vital attention to continuing to understand the needs of international university students contributing to successful academic and social adjustment in America. Korean ESL university students, like other international students, encounter difficulties in improving their English language skills. Learning English and mastering it can be a very difficult task for many Korean ESL students because of the fundamental differences between Korean and English. The phonetic, syntactic, and semantic systems of the two languages are so different that the transition from one language to the other requires great effort from students. This could affect their reading and writing in English and learning behaviors in general. Specific understanding of the reading strategies used by Korean ESL university students attending a US university can be valuable in helping them raise their academic achievement. It also is beneficial to recognize if there are any changes in the use of reading strategies reported by these students over the course of time because it could help instructors understand changes in language learners' strategic learning behaviors and metacognitive

thoughts. The relationship between this use and students' linguistic proficiency with English will impart beneficial information, which may advance ESL/EFL reading. The results of this study distinguish the reported use of the most effectual reading strategies by Korean ESL university students. Knowing this, instructors can demonstrate the use of these strategies and thus scaffold the learning of English language learners and encourage them to be even more skillful as they work in academic settings.

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Retention and Application of Cultural Knowledge: Does Online vs. Seated Course Delivery Make a Difference?

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Abstract

This study investigated graduate students' retention and application of cultural knowledge obtained from a required diversity course in both online and seated course delivery format. The purposes of this research were to: (a) ascertain retention of cultural knowledge; (b) determine cultural knowledge applied into students' classrooms and personal lives, and (c) investigate whether course delivery made a difference. Nine common assignments were investigated. The findings indicated that course delivery had an impact on the retention and application of cultural knowledge in three areas of investigation: English Learners and language acquisition; the documentary on American Indians; and white privilege.

The changing demographics in the U.S. population continue to increase the urgency for P-12 teachers to be able to provide quality instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Thus, the preparation of teachers who can meet this need grows more critical and wide-spread (Ariza, 2010; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; Nieto & McDonough, 2011). "Even in the smallest school districts, it is common for teachers to have one or more students with limited or no command of the English language in their classrooms" (Holmes, Rutledge, & Gauthier, 2009, p. 285). Yet the teaching force remains mainly European American, female, and middle class (Sleeter, 2008).

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As teacher preparation programs require undergraduate and graduate students to take diversity courses, research shows that these courses do strengthen teacher candidates' and practicing teachers' awareness, beliefs, and attitudes regarding diversity (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004; Dome et al., 2005; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Jennings, 2007). Nevertheless, teacher educators must continue to seek out and implement multiple approaches to prepare teachers for diverse classrooms (Herrera, Perez, & Escamilla, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2011). Can online diversity courses fulfill this need and meet expectations?

According to Allen and Seaman (2011), one third of all college students take at least one course online. "It is clear that the growth in online education is ever increasing; however, the design of the learning environment and the level of student engagement is still emerging" (Revere & Kovach, 2011, p.114). While discussion boards remain a popular forum for student engagement and interaction, the research on the use of discussion boards presents contrasting views. Discussion boards can promote camaraderie and friendship (Farquharson, 2007), create a learning atmosphere conducive to students' learning needs and modes (Rovai & Barnum, 2003), facilitate critical engagement (Gilbert & Dabbagh, 2005), enhance cognitive thinking (Kayler & Weller, 2007), and expand knowledge base by sharing experiences and beliefs (Ajayi, 2009). On the contrary, other research studies have found online discussions problematic. Kay (2006) noted that lower levels of knowledge were demonstrated in online discussion boards (based on Blooms' revised taxonomy) and metacognitive knowledge was present in only 1% of posts. This finding is supported by Revere and Kovach (2011), who stated, "the literature shows little evidence that discussion boards deepen analytical and evaluative skills; in fact, students often struggle to move beyond sharing knowledge to recognizing, understanding, and beginning their own process of analysis" (p. 116). Other researchers have documented similar outcomes (Darabi & Jin, 2013; Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2003; Shellens & Valcke, 2005; Sing & Khine, 2006).

Several studies have evaluated the effectiveness of online courses compared to seated courses in regards to student performance and learning outcomes. The U.S. Department of Education (2010) conducted a literature review and meta-analysis to determine how online course learning compares to face-to-face instruction. Analysts searched for experimental or quasi-experimental research studies conducted between 1996 and 2008 that specifically examined student learning outcomes. The initial search returned over 1,100 studies, but after carefully screening, only 50 studies met the criteria, the majority of which were published after 2004. Twenty-seven studies compared fully online courses to fully face-to-face courses; 23 compared fully online courses to face-to-face courses that blended online instruction. Studies in the field of medicine or health care were

most prevalent; followed by computer science, teacher education, social science, and mathematics. As a result of the meta-analysis, four key findings were documented: 1). "The learning outcomes for students in purely online conditions and those for students in purely face-to-face conditions were statistically equivalent" (p. xvi). In other words, "When used by itself, online learning appears to be as effective as conventional classroom instruction, but not more so" (p. xix). 2) "Instruction combining online and face-to-face elements [i.e., blended] had a larger advantage relative to purely face-to-face instruction than did purely online instruction" (p. xvi). The analysts noted it was the combination of "additional learning time and materials as well as additional opportunities for collaboration" (p. xix) that produced higher student learning outcomes. 3) "Elements such as video or online quizzes do not appear to influence the amount that students learn in online classes… Inclusion of more media in an online application does not appear to enhance learning" (p. xvii). 4) "Evidence suggests that promoting self-reflection, self-regulation and self-monitoring leads to more positive online learning outcomes" (p. 45). A dearth exists in the research regarding online diversity courses for teacher education programs. Kitsantas and Talleyrand (2005) conducted a review of the literature to explore how online resources are being used to enhance diversity competencies among preservice teachers. They found several studies supporting the use of online multicultural resources but only one study of a fully online diversity course for teachers. Additionally, Grant and Lee (2014) acknowledged, "there is a significant gap of knowledge about how online teacher education courses are using reflective practices to develop and prepare preservice teachers into culturally responsive educators" (p. 2).

Merryfield's (2001) seminal study shared the process of revising her required, graduate-level multicultural education course from a seated to a fully online asynchronous course. Twenty-five of the 50 students enrolled were people of color from the U.S. or international students. This was the first time taking an online course for the overwhelming majority of the students in the course. While the course content remained the same, asynchronous threaded discussions replaced the face-to-face weekly seminars and web-based resources replaced many of the materials used in the seated course. Merryfield (2001) concluded the following: a) online discussions on difficult topics such as white privilege, racism, and educational injustices seemed more open and honest than discussions in her seated courses; b) online discussions were more inclusive of all members regardless of race, culture, and gender; and c) online interactions were perceived as a "much less meaningful way to interact across cultures or build a diverse learning community" (p. 295). Students remarked technology kept them from "knowing one another or having real relationships" (p. 295).

Akintunde (2006) found online discussions may be beneficial because "much of the negative confrontation and fear of being ridiculed for one's perceived deficit of knowledge in the area of race and multiculturalism are eliminated" (p. 36). On the other hand, Licona and Gurung (2011) noted, "The participants [in the online discussion] were cautious as there was a presence of constant tension—a fear of making "politically" incorrect statements in either environment or identity" (p. 6). Consequently, uncertainty regarding the effectiveness in online diversity courses for teacher education programs remains. "Despite the promises of online learning, there are still questions that remain about the limitations of online courses in building authentic relationships between learners and the long-term impact that online courses will have on changing the practices of preservice and inservice teachers" (Grant & Lee, 2014, p. 6).

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated former graduate students' retention and application of cultural knowledge obtained from RDG 660, Diversity in Literacy and Content Area Instruction, in both online and seated course delivery format. The purposes of this study were to: (a) ascertain retention of cultural knowledge; (b) determine cultural knowledge applied into their classrooms and personal lives, and (c) investigate whether course delivery [online or seated] made a difference. The following research questions guided this study:

1. Did course delivery affect retention of cultural knowledge?
2. Did course delivery impact classroom instructional implementation of cultural knowledge?
3. Did course delivery influence personal application of cultural knowledge?

Method

Participants

The diversity course RDG 660 was offered online for the first time during fall 2013. Twenty-six students were enrolled, 24 females and two males. Ethnicity of students consisted of 22 European American, one African American, and one was Latina. Additionally, one student self identified (only to the instructor) as a White Separatist. The majority of the students (81%) lived in a rural area while 19% of the students lived in an urban area. All of the 26 students were emailed the survey; 11 completed surveys were returned, resulting in a 42% return rate. Nine of

the respondents were Caucasian [one of whom was a White Separatist], one was African American, and one was Latina. Ten of the survey participants were working on their degrees in Masters of Science in Education (MSED) in Literacy, and one was MSED-SEACT (Special Education Alternative Certification Track). Eight of the 11 (72%) were currently teaching in a K-12 classroom; nine of the 11 lived in a rural area.

RDG 660 was offered as a seated format during spring 2014. Fourteen students were enrolled, 13 females and one male. Ethnicity of the group consisted of 13 European American and one was African American. The majority of the students (72%) lived in an urban area while 28% of the students lived in a rural area. All 14 students were emailed the survey; five completed surveys were returned, producing a 36% return rate. Four of the respondents were Caucasian and one was African American. Three of the survey participants were working on their degrees in MSED-Literacy, one was MSED-SEACT, and one was MSED-English. Three of the five (60%) were currently teaching in a K-12 classroom; all five lived in an urban area.

Diversity Course

RDG 660 Diversity in Literacy and Content Area Instruction is a required course for students enrolled in MSED-Literacy and MSED-SEACT graduate programs. It is also listed as an elective course for various master's degree programs. RDG 660 is designed to provide a framework for teacher candidates and practicing teachers to (a) increase their knowledge of diversity and (b) assist them with the implementation of diversity into their curriculum and/or instruction. Course competencies focus on increasing relevant knowledge, pedagogical and professional practice, and professional attributes related to various aspects of diversity in the classroom. Cushner, McClelland, and Safford (2012) asserted, "Teachers must expand their knowledge base of culture and the different groups found in the United States as well as abroad" (p. 25). Thus, the course is designed so students will expand their knowledge of racial, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic diversity, and learn strategies to implement diversity into their literacy instruction and/or content area lessons.

Course Assignments. The students were introduced to different aspects of diversity through a wide variety of course readings, culturally diverse literature, documentaries, webcasts, multicultural interviews, guest speakers and diversity field trips. Students learn about ethnocentrism, characteristics of surface culture (i.e., art, music, dress, etc.) and deep culture (i.e., values, beliefs, norms of behavior, gender roles, etc.), white privilege and unearned advantages, English Learners

and second language acquisition, and strategies for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse learners. The students 1) conducted cross-cultural interviews, 2) recorded and analyzed their personal biases, 3) wrote in their reflective journals on their reading of research cultural articles and diversity topic documentaries, 5) blogged on culturally diverse literature, and 6) developed diversity lesson plans.

> **Course Development.**   The course has been offered every spring or fall semester in a seated format since 2005; however, fall 2013 was the first semester this course had been offered in an online format. Even though I have been using Blackboard in all of my courses for years, this was my first experience designing and teaching a fully online course. I met several times with a member of the Instructional Design (ID) team at the campus Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL) during the spring and summer of 2013. We discussed various ways to modify the existing seated course into an online format, and she helped me design assignments using blogs, online journals, and small group discussion boards. I also participated in FCTL peer review workshops that gave me the opportunity to review and evaluate existing online courses that had been deemed high quality. After completing a course self-assessment on RDG 660, this course was peer reviewed by several colleagues who offered beneficial and in-depth feedback to improve it.

Instrument

This was a descriptive study utilizing an online survey instrument, InQsit, to collect data. The survey contained two parts. Section one inquired about demographic data, such as degree program and classroom teaching experience. The second section focused on nine areas of investigation based on common assignments both the online and seated sections were required to complete: ethnocentricity, deep culture, cross-cultural interview, bias journals, culturally diverse literature, diversity lesson plan, English Learners, diversity documentary, and white privilege.

The survey contained both qualitative open-ended questions and quantitative multiple choice and Likert-scale questions. Open-ended questions were meant to determine retention of knowledge by asking respondents to define (i.e., what are BICS?), explain (i.e., what are some characteristics of your deep culture?), or recall (i.e., what culturally diverse books did you read for class?). Quantitative questions sought to establish levels of (a) academic classroom instructional implementation by asking participants how often they discussed and/or shared cultural resources with their students and colleagues (daily, weekly, twice a month, once a month, once a semester, never), and (b) personal application by inquiring how

often they discussed and/or shared diversity resources with their friends and family members (never, once, 2-4 times, 5+ times). See Appendix A for survey.

Data Collection and Analysis

Surveys were emailed to former students at the end of February 2013 (to the fall 2013 students) and September 2014 (to the spring 2014 students). Quantitative questionnaire data were analyzed using InQsit analysis features, which presented descriptive data using percentages, frequencies, mean, and standard deviation. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were analyzed using the constant comparative method, searching for patterns that occurred within and across data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, this was the first time I had designed and taught an online course, and I was still working through the idiosyncrasies of online teaching. Second, this study utilized an online survey instrument, and self-reported data depends on the integrity of the respondents to answer honestly and to the best of their ability. Third, the study employed non-random, purposive sampling methods and was conducted with a small, specific population of students who had taken the course. Therefore, results cannot be generalized to a larger audience.

Results

Retention of Cultural Knowledge

Did course delivery affect retention of cultural knowledge? Survey questions that addressed retention of cultural knowledge asked students to define, explain, or recall information using open-ended questions. This research question applied to seven of the nine areas of investigation, four of which showed high levels of knowledge retention: ethnocentrism, deep culture, cross-cultural interviews, and culturally diverse literature. One hundred percent of respondents in both courses were able to define ethnocentrism. One student noted, "Ethnocentricity is the belief that your culture is better than everyone else's culture. Many Americans are ethnocentric and view other cultures to be less than theirs." Ninety percent of both groups explained several characteristics of deep culture, with many respondents similarly stating, "Characteristics of deep culture are your SES status, traditions, beliefs, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc." Both groups recalled two important pieces of information from their cross-cultural interviews (90%

online; 100% seated). One student from the online course recalled her interview with some detail:

> *I remember that in the Hmong culture, the father is not only the patriarch, but also the person who decides his children's futures, especially for the girls. They are not allowed to date until their father approves and says they can. Also, in this culture there are rituals/ceremonies for death that are quite different and involve animal spirit guides and animal sacrifices.*

A respondent from the seated section shared a poignant memory, "The person I interviewed told me a story about when he was denied service at a restaurant due to the color of his skin, and that has really stuck with me. The interview was very impacting." Another student remarked, "You should never assume a student has poor language skills or is unintelligent just because he/she speaks with an accent. I learned the value of sitting down face-to-face with someone who is different from me and asking about their life."

The survey asked students to recall titles of the culturally diverse literature they read for the course. Ten of eleven students in the online course named at least one specific title of a culturally diverse book they read, listing a total of 18 titles (1.6 books per person). Some students were vague on the titles of the books they read: "I read one about an Asian American child celebrating the Fourth of July and about an African American boy who spent time fishing with his grandfather." Other students named specific titles, "I read the book *No Mirrors in my Nana's House* for African American culture." In the seated section, four out of five named at least one specific title, listing a total of 13 books (2.6 books per person). One student noted, "I read many books that had won the Coretta Scott King Award" and then proceeded to list a few titles. Additionally, four of the five students in the seated section listed the cultural memoirs they had read as a course requirement. The survey also asked students how many culturally diverse books they had read since RDG ended and to list them, if possible. Four of the eleven students in the online section marked they had not read any additional books, but seven students noted they had between three and six books. Three students listed 10 specific titles. One student in the online section wrote, "I now have a multi-cultural basket in my classroom library and read from it often, so there are too many to list." In the seated section, two of the five students marked they had not read any additional books, but three students noted they had between three and eight books. Two students listed 9 specific titles. A respondent from the seated course stated, "I purchased many books from a library sale and read

them all to make sure they were classroom appropriate. I looked for books with awards on them and authors who were of the culture depicted in the book." See Appendix B for list of books.

According to data analysis, course delivery did seem to affect retention of cultural knowledge in three areas of investigation: English Learners, the diversity documentary, and white privilege. Students in the online and the seated sections read the same articles about English Learners that described several theories of second language acquisition and outlined numerous instructional strategies, and they wrote reflective journal entries over the material. An ESOL teacher spoke to the seated class, while the online group watched webcasts by ESOL experts. On the survey both groups were able to explain at least one instructional strategy for English Learners (72% online; 80% seated). The online respondents noted strategies such as providing visuals, using cognates, tapping in prior/background knowledge, retelling, using cloze reading, applying the vocabulary multiple times, implementing cooperative learning, and labeling items in the classroom. One student wrote, "Don't use slang. Talk to the student; don't look away or turn away when speaking. Immerse them with words walls around the room." Students in the seated course suggested strategies such as slow down, eliminate jargon and contractions, do not use idioms, give extra time, use visuals, and allow students to use their first language in the classroom. One student explained, "Seat ELs in the middle row towards the end so they can see what others are doing and so you can get to them easily. Also let them talk and work in pairs; it helps with the English acquisition." Nevertheless, in the online course, only four out of eleven (36%) were able to define BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and two out of eleven (18%) could define CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). In contrast, four out of five (80%) students in the seated course correctly defined both terms. This discrepancy is important to note because the principles of BICS and CALP are foundational to understanding second language acquisition and, therefore, helpful in recognizing the challenges English Learners face (Cummins, 1981).

Both classes watched a documentary over Native American youth on reservations in the Southwest (*When your hands are tied)* and wrote reflective journals on the importance of language and culture; however, the seated course had a guest speaker who was a tribally-registered Cherokee. All of the students in the seated section were able to recall a minimum of two facts about the documentary. Four of out five discussed the challenges Native youth face due to poverty, drugs, and alcohol use. "Many of the kids turned to drugs and alcohol because of their hard home lives." All five remarked on the importance of cultural practices such as dancing, coming-of-age ceremonies, and singing, as well as the use of their

native languages throughout the documentary. One student thoughtfully commented, "I learned we need to cherish their culture not minimize it. It is a part of who they are at their core and that needs to be amplified!" Conversely, only 63% of the online students could state one fact about the documentary, and the comments were one dimensional such as "they like art" and "they have their own music subculture."

Both classes watched an interview with Dr. Peggy McIntosh, read her article, *White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack* (1990), wrote reflective journals, and participated in small group discussions. The information presented on white privilege was retained by 100% of the seated section. The topic of white privilege and unearned advantages was brought up and discussed several times throughout the seated course, often initiated by the only person of color in the seated section, an African American male who shared personal examples of how white privilege has affected his life. Consequently, on the survey, he succinctly summarized: "Professional earnings; Professional power; Educational opportunities; Lending." Another student noted, "It's the ability to shop without being followed or being suspected of shop lifting, the ability to see my race on TV in a positive light. I am not asked to offer the perspective of my entire race." One respondent wrote, "That band-aids are the color of white skin. That blew my mind and I still remember it!" However, only 36% of those in the online section retained information about white privilege. While several students wrote thoughtful and passionate journal entries on white privilege, the majority of the content in the small group online discussions was superficial. On the survey, two respondents similarly noted, "Being able to shop without feeling watched; driving and not being pulled over because of race." The Latina student stated, "Because I'm not white, I see these privileges daily in areas such as jobs, education, promotions; and different services." But the concept of white privilege was

TABLE 1
Retention of Cultural Knowledge

Areas of investigation	Online	Seated
Ethnocentrism	100%	100%
Deep culture	90%	90%
Cross-cultural interview	90%	100%
Instructional strategies for English Learners:	72%	80%
Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills	36%	80%
Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency	18%	80%
Diversity documentary	63%	100%
White privilege	36%	100%

rejected by the student who self-identified as a White Separatist: Dr. McIntosh needs to come to my part of the country to learn that unearned white privilege does not exist. If a student wants to learn, no matter what his obstacles might be, he will overcome them. Nothing in this area comes easily to anyone, no matter what color or culture they come from. We are all equally poor. Your station in life is your choice.

Academic Implementation of Cultural Knowledge

Did course delivery impact academic classroom implementation of cultural knowledge? Survey questions inquiring about academic classroom implementation invited graduate students to contemplate how often they discussed and/or shared information and resources with their students and colleagues: daily, weekly, twice a month, once a month, once a semester, or never. This question applied to eight of the nine areas of investigation as the majority of the respondents in both groups reported not having any English Learners in their classrooms.

Analysis revealed four areas of investigation with fairly equal levels of academic classroom implementation between the online and seated classes: ethnocentrism, cross-cultural interviews, culturally diverse literature, and diversity lesson plans. Fifty percent or more of both groups reported talking with their students and colleagues about ethnocentricity at least once a month; however, 80% of the seated group shared with their colleagues weekly to once a month. During the seated course, we attended a campus viewing of *Eyes on the Prize*, a PBS documentary on the Civil Rights movement, followed with a panel discussion of African American community leaders who shared personal accounts of segregated schools and businesses. Students were able to see and hear personal examples of ethnocentrism, and many were moved to tears. Unfortunately, the online section did not have this hands-on opportunity.

The cross-cultural interviews sparked great interest in both courses. According to data analysis, more than 70% of both groups discussed information about their cross-cultural interviews with their students at least once a month, and 63% of the online and 100% of the seated group talked with their colleagues. All of the students participated in small group discussions in order to share information about their interviews. However, while the students in the seated section told stories about the people they interviewed, students in the online discussions tended to list characteristics and information about the person they interviewed.

Over the course of each semester, students were required to read several culturally diverse children's and/or young adult books. They chose their books from the numerous websites that were provided to introduce them to quality

award-winning titles. Students created blogs on their book selections, which were available to all members of the course to peruse and offer comments. Analysis of data showed both groups shared culturally diverse books with their students on a weekly basis (27% online; 40% seated) or twice a month (45% online; 40% seated). Over 50% of the survey respondents from both groups talked to their colleagues about culturally diverse literature no less than once a month, with 60% of the seated group sharing twice a month. Additionally, at least once a semester, over 60% of both groups used the diversity websites presented in RDG 660 and talked to their school librarians about culturally diverse books. See Appendix C for a list of the websites. Over 50% of survey respondents from both groups had developed one to four diversity lesson plans since the course had ended (54% online; 80% seated), with one person in the online group having developed 9-10 plans.

It is unclear how course delivery impacted academic implementation of cultural knowledge in the areas of deep culture and bias journals. At the beginning of each semester, students were introduced to the topic of culture and learned the differences between surface (art, music, food, dress, etc.) and deep (values, beliefs, norms of behavior, etc.) culture. They then wrote a cultural autobiography in which they reflected on their own personal culture. Many of the students in the online section wrote they had never thought they had a culture of their own culture and therefore had a difficult time describing it. However, they particularly connected with the aspects of deep culture that entail religion and family and wrote passionately about both. On the other hand, the majorities of the students in the seated section was already familiar with the characteristics of culture and were able to write about their own culture with some ease. Perhaps the novelty of learning about one's deep culture may help explain why eighty-one percent of the online group spoke to their class at least once a month about deep culture, and only 50% in the seated group did. Additionally, 63% of the online group discussed deep culture with their colleagues once a month, while only 40% of the respondents in the seated group did.

All students were required to keep a bias journal for two to three weeks in which they tracked and recorded their immediate responses to people who were different from them. They were asked to record their initial reaction immediately without denying any initial thoughts. Then they analyzed their responses for patterns in order to identify the origin of their thoughts (i.e., culture, family, friends, religion, media), wrote a reflective paper over their analyses, and participated in small group discussions. Many students from the online course emailed me stating they did not believe they had any biases and were in a quandary as to what to do with their bias journals. I suggested they visit Wal-Mart, and I shared a bias

of my own that is usually triggered with a visit to the store. Online and seated discussions were both rather stilted, presumably because most people were not comfortable openly discussing personal biases. Nevertheless, 80% of the respondents from the seated group noted speaking to students and colleagues at least once a month about biases, but only 54% of the online group did. Since the majority of students in the online section lived and taught in small rural towns, this finding was not surprising.

As indicated by analysis of data, course delivery seemed to have the biggest impact on academic implementation of cultural knowledge in the areas of the Native American documentary and white privilege. For example, over 70% of the online group reported never discussing the documentary with their students or colleagues; yet 60% of the seated group spoke with their students about it at least once a semester and 100% shared with their colleagues. The seated section had the opportunity to hear the guest speaker address specific issues in the documentary and directly answer students' questions; consequently, they were more closely connected and personally affected by the documentary. Less than 40% of

TABLE 2
Academic Implementation of Cultural Knowledge

Areas of investigation	Online	Seated
Ethnocentricity:		
With students, monthly	72%	50%
With colleagues, 1-2x month	54%	80%
Deep culture:		
With students, 1x month	81%	50%
With colleagues, > 1x month	63%	40%
Cross-cultural interview:		
With students > 1x month	72%	80%
With colleagues > 1x month	63%	100%
Bias Journals:		
With students > 1x month	54%	80%
With colleagues > 1x month	63%	80%
Culturally diverse literature:		
With friends, weekly	27%	40%
With family, monthly	54%	60%
Diversity Documentary:		
With students > 1x semester	18%	60%
With colleagues > 1x semester	18%	80%
White privilege:		
With students, at least once	37%	80%
With colleagues > 1x semester	54%	60%

the online group indicated they shared with their students about white privilege, while 80% of the seated group did. However, both groups noted talking with their colleagues at least once a semester about white privilege (54% online; 60% seated). The majority of the students in the online section lived in rural areas and worked in schools in small towns with very little diversity, so it is possible that perhaps they did not feel comfortable discussing issues of white privilege with their students and co-workers.

Personal Application of Cultural Knowledge

Did course delivery influence personal application of cultural knowledge? Survey questions that addressed personal application of cultural knowledge encouraged graduate students to contemplate how often they discussed and/or shared cultural information and resources with their friends and family: never, once, 2-4 times, 5+ times. This research question applied to seven areas of investigation, four of which showed high levels of application of cultural knowledge into personal lives: ethnocentrism, deep culture, cross-cultural interviews, and bias journals.

All of the respondents in the seated section reported talking to friends about ethnocentrism more than twice, but only 45% of the online group did. Nevertheless, over 70% of both groups discussed this topic with family members more than once. Over 60% of both groups reported talking with family and friends at least twice about deep culture (63% online; 80% seated). The majority of both groups shared information from their cross-cultural interviews with friends and family at least twice (63% online; 80% seated); however 60% of the seated group shared more than five times with both family and friends. The majority of students in both the online and seated sections led busy lives, working full time, taking more than one graduate course, and many had families. One student remarked, "I am so busy during the semester that I barely have time to talk to my family about course work much less my friends."

Three additional questions were asked regarding the cross-cultural interviews, two which utilized a Likert scale rating of 1-5 with 1 being the most. Survey participants were asked to rate how much they believed the cultural interview process helped to move them beyond their initial cultural comfort zone. While the seated group rated this experience higher (mean 1.60; standard deviation [SD] .49), respondents in the online group were more neutral in their responses (mean 2.64; SD .48). Survey participants were asked to rate how much this interview inspired them to meet and talk with others from different cultures. Results for this question were fairly similar to the previous question (seated: mean 1.60, SD .49; online: mean 2.55; SD.99). The third question asked how often they have gone out of their way to talk with others from different cultural and

linguistic backgrounds since conducting the interview. While 80% of the seated group responded they have done so over five times, less than half of the online group has made the effort at least twice. Most of the students in the online course lived in rural areas with very little ethnic and racial diversity; on the contrary, all of the students in the seated section who responded to the survey lived in an urban area with a population over 150,000 that included four colleges and universities. One student in the seated section responded,

> *I am very involved with others of different backgrounds. I am friends with 2 women from Pakistan, tutor women in ESL from Burma, and lead a study for international students around the world at my house. It has transformed my view of international students!!*

Survey participants were asked how often they had thought about their biases before taking RDG 660, how often they had reflected on them after class ended, and if they had an action plan to remove their biases. While 81% of the online group acknowledged they had not thought about their biases prior to RDG 660, 60% of the seated group had. Nevertheless, both groups indicated they have reflected on their biases fairly often since class ended (Likert scale 1-5 with 1 being the most: online: mean 2.73; SD .96; seated: mean 1.80; SD .98), and over 60% of both groups spoke with friends and family at least twice about biases. An overwhelming majority (> 70%) of both groups reported having an action plan in place to remove their biases. A student in the online course remarked,

> *I have had to think that maybe their upbringings are different than mine. I have also had to keep in mind that many of my biases were stereotypes and not all stereotypes are true and definitely not true for all in that culture.*

Another online student wrote, "Making sure I talk with my students and get to know their backgrounds and home life rather than making generalizations or assumptions. Conversation can immediately remove the biases." A student in the seated section shared, "I have tried to remind myself that many people's actions are based on their beliefs that may be different than mine." And finally another student on campus stated, "Whenever my biases rear their ugly head, I just remind myself that we all have a story to tell and I just need to find out what their story is before I can pass judgement." In accordance with data analysis, course delivery seemed to influence personal application of cultural knowledge in the areas of culturally diverse literature, the diversity documentary, and white

privilege. For example, more than half of the online group reported never having discussed or shared culturally diverse literature with family or friends, yet over 60% of the seated group did share with family and friends more than twice. During the seated course, every other week book talks on culturally diverse literature were conducted. The book talks were meant to introduce diverse authors and illustrators, describe features of culturally authentic literature, and build excitement for culturally diverse literature. In turn, students in the seated course often brought to class the literature they were reading and shared the books with their peers. Several times, I overheard students saying they couldn't wait to read a book to their children or share it with a friend.

Almost 70% of the online participants never shared information about the diversity documentary with family and friends, but 80% of the seated group did. Additionally, 100% of the online group never viewed the documentary again, while 60% of the seated section did. Having the guest speaker present during the documentary viewing and available for questions helped to bring alive the

TABLE 3
Personal Application of Cultural Knowledge

Areas of investigation	Online	Seated
Ethnocentricity:		
With friends > 2x	45%	100%
With family > 2x	72%	80%
Deep culture:		
With friends > 2x	63%	80%
With Family > 2x	63%	60%
Cross-cultural interview:		
With friends > 2x	72%	80%
With family > 2x	63%	60%
Bias journals:		
With friends > 2x	63%	80%
With family, at least once	81%	100%
Culturally diverse literature:		
With friends, at least once	27%	40%
With family, 1-4 times	45%	60%
Diversity Documentary:		
With friends, 1x	36%	40%
With family, 1x	18%	60%
White privilege:		
With friends, at least once	27%	100%
With family, at least once	63%	100%

content and stories of the documentary. Our guest expert was able to speak with first-hand knowledge on many topics in the documentary, which sparked a deep level of interest.

When asked if they have reflected on issues of white privilege since class ended, 100% of the seated group indicated they had, as opposed to 63% of the online section who had and 36% who never have. On the contrary, 100% of the seated group reported having discussed white privilege with family and friends, 40% who did so more than five times. Meanwhile with the online section, over 60% never discussed this topic with their friends and less than half shared with their family members only once. Even though both groups of students did the same assignments on white privilege, the seated section had multiple opportunities to personalize white privilege: individual accounts from diverse guest speakers, the campus field trip to the Eyes *on the Prize* documentary viewing and panel discussion, and their African American peer who often shared stories of how white privilege has touched his life.

Discussion and Conclusions

The findings of this study indicate that course delivery did not seem to impact students' retention and application of cultural knowledge in six of the nine areas of investigation based on common assignments both the online and seated sections were required to complete: ethnocentrism, deep culture, cross-cultural interviews, culturally diverse literature, diversity lesson plans, and understanding biases. Students in both online and seated formats were able to define terms and offer examples to support their retention of information several months after completing the course. This outcome is compatible with a key finding from the U.S. Department of Education (2010) study: "online learning appears to be as effective as conventional classroom instruction, but not more so" (p. xix). Additionally, this finding adds to the research literature that indicates diversity courses do strengthen teacher candidates' and practicing teachers' awareness, beliefs, and attitudes regarding diversity (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004; Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2012; Dome et al., 2005; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Jennings, 2007).

However, other findings of this study indicate that course delivery did seem to impact students' retention and application of cultural knowledge in three of the nine areas of investigation: English Learners and second language acquisition, the Native American documentary, and white privilege. During the seated course, guest speakers were a prominent feature of the course structure. International faculty members and students talked with the class at length

about what it is like to learn and live in another language. They shared first-hand knowledge and experiences about the impact of BICS (basic interpersonal communication skills), CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency), and the challenges English Learners face (Cummins, 1981). They revealed personal struggles with learning academic English and striving to be successful students. An ESOL teacher discussed strategies for teaching English Learners (ELs), and the course professor demonstrated and implemented many instructional strategies for ELs throughout the semester.

In both the online and seated courses, students read research articles about English Learners and second language acquisition and journaled about what they were learning. Since the majority of respondents in both groups reported not having any English Learners in their classrooms, both groups lacked direct classroom experience with ELs. In the online section, in lieu of guest speakers students viewed professional development webcasts by experts in the field on various aspects of instruction and assessment of ELs as well as language acquitisiton and journaled and discussed online what they were learning. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2010) finding, "Elements such as video or online quizzes do not appear to influence the amount that students learn in online classes… Inclusion of more media in an online application does not appear to enhance learning" (p. xvii). So even though the content presented in both sections was quite similar, the retention and application of knowledge regarding English Learners was not as high in the online course as it was with the seated. Supplementing the international guest speakers and ESOL teacher with webcasts of experts did not appear to have the same positive outcome on the online section as the live speakers did with the seated course.

Online course delivery directly affected retention and application of cultural knowledge in regards to the diversity documentary over Native American youth on reservations in the Southwest and the importance of language to one's culture. During the seated course, students experienced the expertise and passion of our guest speaker, a professor on campus who is a tribally registered member of the Cherokee Nation. He was present during the documentary viewing and was thus able to provide immediate feedback and offer deeper insight into many aspects of the documentary. Class members had an additional opportunity to interact with him at the end of the semester in a more informal setting. Unfortunately, students in the online course did not have the opportunity to meet and speak with him face-to-face. They viewed the documentary after learning information about American Indians from culturally diverse websites and literature, and participated in small-group online discussions. Even so, discussion content over the documentary and other resources lacked depth and critical understanding of the

issues presented. This lack of critical depth in online discussions has been highlighted by many researchers (Darabi & Jin, 2013; Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2003; Revere & Kovach, 2011; Shellens & Valcke, 2005; Sing & Khine, 2006). While the guest speaker provided written comments to the online students about the documentary in particular and offered his email address for them to ask him questions, none of the students in the online section chose to contact him. This finding supports Kay's (2006) assertion that "students tend to do the bare minimum when participation [in online discussion] is mandatory" (p. 763).

Finally, students in the seated course retained and applied knowledge on white privilege at a much higher level than the online group. During the seated section, we watched an interview with Dr. Peggy McIntosh and read her article, *Unpacking the White Knapsack* (1990). Examples of white privilege were brought to life when one of the graduate students shared his personal experiences as an African American male, thus opening an honest dialogue among classmates about race issues in the United States. While students in the online course also viewed the interview, read the same article, and participated in an online discussion in small groups over white privilege, they did not encounter the first-hand stories of a colleague who experienced racism and white privilege. Although the online course had two students of color enrolled who did share in their reflective papers and journals, they did not choose to share personal experiences with discrimination and white privilege in the online course discussion boards. Merryfield (2001) found her students' online discussions were more open and honest on difficult topics such as white privilege and racism, which is not congruent with the finding of this study. Kay (2006) noted students had "difficulty trusting the quality of their peers' messages" (p. 766). Additionally, Licona and Gurung (2011) found students were "cautious" about sharing on difficult and sensitive topics for fear of making "politically incorrect statements" (p. 6). Both of these reasons may have contributed to this issue with the students in the online section of RDG 660.

Implications

Since online teaching seems to be a fixture in our teacher preparation programs, we must continue to research effective ways to impart critical information for students in online courses. While the content presented in RDG 660 was similar in both the online and seated sections, the personal connection lacked in the online course–similar to Merryfield's finding that online interactions were a "much less meaningful way to interact" in a diversity course (2001, p. 295). Guest speakers, class diversity field trips, impromptu discussions that arise out of personal

experiences and struggles—these types of events and occurrences are difficult to replicate in an online course. While guest speaker presentations can be video-taped for students in online courses to view, the experience remains static rather than alive with spontaneous discussions that occur through real-time question and answer sessions. Consequently, "adding more media to an online application does not appear to enhance learning" (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2010, p. xvii). Using Skype as a means for bringing live guest speakers to an online course may be an option for programs that allow synchronous, real-time teaching; however, many university programs require that online courses remain 100% available, 100% of the time so that students may access information on their own schedule without having to "meet as a class" at a set time or date. It is a continual process, exploring new ways to create learning situations for online students that can bring the personal connection like guest speakers into the course platform.

In many online courses, online discussion boards continue to be utilized as a primary forum for student communication about course topics; however, discussions in this online diversity course did not prove to be as fruitful as those in the seated section. Kay's (2006) research found that approximately 33% of students in online courses are eager participants who enthusiastically contribute to online discussions, while the other two-thirds participate either sparingly or do the bare minimum. Finding appropriate tools to help more students become enthusiastically involved in online discussions remains essential. For example, many students in the online section wrote with depth and passion in their reflective journals on a variety of diversity topics, but unfortunately this type of critical thought seldom appeared in the online discussions. This finding conflicts with Akintunde's study (2006) in which he found online discussions of diversity topics to be beneficial. Whereas students in the seated section bonded and formed a somewhat intimate classroom community, the majority of students in the online section chose not to post photos of themselves or share much personal information with each other.

In Merryfield's (2001) diversity course, teachers described the online relationships as "incomplete." One teachers stated, "You don't know someone until you look in their eyes" (p. 296). Consequently, in essence, the online section of RDG 660 remained surface level while the seated section delved deeper. So the question remains, how can we as teacher educators form a more intimate classroom community with our online diversity courses? While students in the online course were willing to individually explore diversity topics in depth in their personal journals and reflective papers, they did not choose to share this information with others in an online discussion board, even in smaller, more intimate groupings. This was the first diversity course for all but one of the students

in the online course, and many of the students struggled emotionally with the new information they were learning. Journal comments such as, "I never knew slavery was so morally reprehensible"; "I cried for hours thinking about the slave mother whose child was torn from her arms and sold in front of her," and "why were we never taught about the genocide of the American Indians?" were prevalent. Even private emails from me to students, gently urging them to share these types of comments in the online discussion forum, did not move them to share with their peers. Perhaps the faceless anonymity of an online course impeded the ability to deliver appropriate and impactful diversity content through online discussion boards.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY

Investigating Retention, Implementation and Application of Cultural Knowledge Acquired from RDG 660 in Online and Seated Sections

1. Which semester did you take the diversity class RDG 660?
    a. Fall 2013 online
    b. Spring 2014 seated

2. In which degree program were you enrolled when you took RDG 660?
    a. Accelerated Literacy-MSED (Elementary Ed-BSED)
    b. Literacy-MSED
    c. MAT
    d. Autism Spectrum Disorders-GRCT
    e. Special Ed/Alternative Cert-MSED
    f. Educational Technology-MSED
    g. Elementary Ed-MSED
    h. English-MSED
    i. Counseling-MS

3. Are you currently teaching in a classroom?
    a. Yes
    b. No

4. If so, what grade level[s] do you teach?
    a. K-1
    b. 2-3
    c. 4-5
    d. 6-8
    e. 9-12
    f. Community college
    g. University

5. How many years of classroom teaching experience do you currently have?
   a. Student teaching only
   b. 1-2
   c. 3-4
   d. 5-6
   e. 7-8
   f. 9-10
   g. 11-15
   h. 16+

6. We began the semester with a lesson over Ethnocentricity. Briefly define ethnocentricity &/or give an example of it.

7. Prior to 660, could you define ethnocentrism?
   a. Yes
   b. No

8. After learning about ethnocentricity in RDG 660, how often do you talk with your students about it?
   a. Daily
   b. Weekly
   c. Twice a month
   d. Once a month
   e. Once a semester
   f. Never

9. With your colleagues?
   a. Daily
   b. Weekly
   c. Twice a month
   d. Once a month
   e. Once a semester
   f. Never

10. With your friends?
    a. Never
    b. Once
    c. 2-4 times
    d. 5+ times

11. With your family?
    a. Never
    b. Once

    c. 2-4 times
    d. 5+ times

12. At the beginning of the semester, we spent time discussing and defining culture. What are some characteristics of your deep culture?

13. After writing about your own culture, how often do you talk with your students about the characteristics of culture?
    a. Daily
    b. Weekly
    c. Twice a month
    d. Once a month
    e. Once a semester
    f. Never

14. With your colleagues?
    a. Daily
    b. Weekly
    c. Twice a month
    d. Once a month
    e. Once a semester
    f. Never

15. With your friends?
    a. Never
    b. Once
    c. 2-4 times
    d. 5+ times

16. With your family?
    a. Never
    b. Once
    c. 2-4 times
    d. 5+ times

17. You interviewed a person from a different cultural & ethnic background and wrote a biography on her/him. What are two important things you remember from this interview?

18. After this interview, how often do you talk with your students about different cultures and ethnic groups?
    a. Daily
    b. Weekly
    c. Twice a month

    d. Once a month
    e. Once a semester
    f. Never

19. With your colleagues?
    a. Daily
    b. Weekly
    c. Twice a month
    d. Once a month
    e. Once a semester
    f. Never

20. With your friends?
    a. Never
    b. Once
    c. 2-4 times
    d. 5+ times

21. With your family?
    a. Never
    b. Once
    c. 2-4 times
    d. 5+ times

22. How much has this interview process helped to move you beyond your initial cultural comfort zone? Likert range=5 "a lot" "not at all"

23. How much has this interview inspired you to meet and talk with others from different cultural & ethnic backgrounds? Likert range=5 "a lot" "not at all"

24. How often do you go out of your way to talk with others from different cultural & ethnic backgrounds?
    a. Never
    b. Once
    c. 2-4 times
    d. 5+ times

25. For two weeks you kept a bias journal, analyzed your entries, and looked for specific patterns in your reactions. Prior to 660, had you reflected on or analyzed your biases?
    a. Yes
    b. No

26. How often have you reflected on your biases since class ended?
    Likert range=5 "a lot" "not at all"

27. What type of actions have you taken to remove the biases you noted in class?

28. How often do you talk about biases with your students?
    a. Daily
    b. Weekly
    c. Twice a month
    d. Once a month
    e. Once a semester
    f. Never

29. With your colleagues?
    a. Daily
    b. Weekly
    c. Twice a month
    d. Once a month
    e. Once a semester
    f. Never

30. With your friends?
    a. Never
    b. Once
    c. 2-4 times
    d. 5+ times

31. Family members?
    a. Never
    b. Once
    c. 2-4 times
    d. 5+ times

32. When you took RDG 660, you were required to read several culturally diverse children's or young adult literature. What books did you read for class?

33. You wrote blogs on each book you read & reviewed 3 peers' blogs. Did you read any books from your peers' blogs?
    a. Yes
    b. No

34. If so, which one[s]?

35. How many other culturally diverse books have you read since you took RDG 660?
    a. None
    b. 1-2

   c. 3-4
   d. 5-6
   e. 7-8
   f. 9-10
   g. 11+

36. Please list some titles or authors you've read since class ended.

37. How often do you use culturally diverse children's or young adult literature in your classroom teaching?
   a. Daily
   b. Weekly
   c. Twice a month
   d. Once a month
   e. Once a semester
   f. Never

38. How often do you share culturally diverse children's or young adult literature with your colleagues?
   a. Daily
   b. Weekly
   c. Twice a month
   d. Once a month
   e. Once a semester
   f. Never

39. With your friends?
   a. Never
   b. Once
   c. 2-4 times
   d. 5+ times

40. With your family members?
   a. Never
   b. Once
   c. 2-4 times
   d. 5+ times

41. How often do you use the websites from RDG 660 to find culturally diverse books?
   a. Daily
   b. Weekly
   c. Twice a month

    d. Once a month

    e. Once a semester

    f. Never

42. How often do you talk with your school librarian about culturally diverse literature?

    a. Daily

    b. Weekly

    c. Twice a month

    d. Once a month

    e. Once a semester

    f. Never

43. You developed a diversity lesson plan utilizing culturally diverse literature. Since RDG 660, how many diversity lesson plans have you developed?

    a. None

    b. 1-2

    c. 3-4

    d. 5-6

    e. 7-8

    f. 9-10

    g. 11+

44. We covered various aspects of English Learners, such as: language acquisition, BICS & CALP, and instructional strategies for ELs. What are BICS?

45. What is CALP?

46. What are some instructional strategies you found most beneficial for ELs?

47. Since taking RDG 660, have had any English Learners in your classroom?

    a. Yes

    b. No

48. If yes, what information did you learn about ELs in RDG 660 that you found most helpful?

49. You watched a documentary on Native American youth on reservations titled, "When your hands are tied." What important piece of information do you recall from this documentary?

50. How often do you talk about this documentary with your students?

    a. Daily

    b. Weekly

    c. Twice a month

    d. Once a month

    e. Once a semester

    f. Never

51. With your colleagues?
    a. Daily
    b. Weekly
    c. Twice a month
    d. Once a month
    e. Once a semester
    f. Never

52. With your Friends?
    a. Never
    b. Once
    c. 2-4 times
    d. 5+ times

53. With your Family?
    a. Never
    b. Once
    c. 2-4 times
    d. 5+ times

54. Have you viewed this documentary again since taking RDG 660?
    a. Yes
    b. No

55. We read an article by Dr. Peggy McIntosh in which she listed 20 daily effects of white privilege and unearned advantages. Prior to 660, how much did you know about white privilege? Likert range=5 "a lot" "not at all"

56. What are a few of the unearned advantages that you recall from Dr. McIntosh's list?

57. How often do you reflect on the issue of white privilege and unearned advantages since RDG 660 ended?
    a. Daily
    b. Weekly
    c. Twice a month
    d. Once a month
    e. Once a semester
    f. Never

58. How often do you talk about white privilege & unearned advantages with your students?
    a. Daily
    b. Weekly
    c. Twice a month
    d. Once a month
    e. Once a semester
    f. Never

59. With your colleagues?
    a. Daily
    b. Weekly
    c. Twice a month
    d. Once a month
    e. Once a semester
    f. Never

60. With your friends?
    a. Never
    b. Once
    c. 2-4 times
    d. 5+ times

61. With your family members?
    a. Never
    b. Once
    c. 2-4 times
    d. 5+ times

62. Overall as a teacher, how beneficial did you find the content presented in RDG 660?
    Likert range=5 "a lot" "not at all"

63. Overall as a citizen, how beneficial did you find the content presented in RDG 660?
    Likert range=5 "a lot" "not at all"

64. Please feel free to add any additional comments regarding what you learned from RDG 660 and how you are using that information in your classroom and personal life.

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to complete this survey! I very much appreciate your assistance!

APPENDIX B
Culturally Diverse Literature

Online respondents: Books read during diversity course

Barnwell, Y. M. (2005). *No mirrors in my Nana's house*. New York City, NY: Harcourt Brace.

Choi, Y. (2003). *The name jar*. New York City, NY: Dell Dragonfly Books.

Colon, E. (2011). *Good-bye, Havana! Hola, New York!* New York City, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Hopkinson, D. (2006). *Girl wonder: A baseball story in nine innings*. New York City, NY: Antheum Books for Young Readers.

Levy, J. (1995). *The spirit of Tio Fernando: A Day of the Dead story*. [bilingual] New York City, NY: Albert Whitman & Company.

Lin, G. (2004). *Kite flying*. New York City, NY: Dell Dragonfly Books.

Martin, R. (1998). *The rough-face girl*. New York City, NY: Puffin Books.

Mitchell, M. K. (1998). *Uncle Jed's barbershop*. New York City, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks

Munoz Ryan, P. (2005). *Becoming Naomi Leon*. New York City, NY: Scholastic.

Polacco, P. (2001). *The keeping quilt.* New York City, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Winter, J. (1994). *Diego*. New York City, NY: Dell Dragonfly Books.

Winter, J. (2010). *Biblioburro: A true story from Colombia*. New York City, NY: Dell Dragonfly Books.

Yang, B. (2004). *Hannah is my name.* New York City, NY: Candlewick.

Yep, L. (2011). *The dragon's child: A story of Angel Island*. New York City, NY: Harper Collins.

Books read after class by online students:

Choi, Y. (2003). *The name jar*. New York City, NY: Dell Dragonfly Books.

Crews, D. (1996). *Shortcut*. New York City, NY: Greenwillow Books.

Crews, D. (1998). *Bigmama's*. New York City, NY: Greenwillow Books.

Hoffman, M. (1991). *Amazing Grace*. New York City, NY: Dial Books.

Hosseini, K. (2004). *The kite runner.* New York City, NY: Penguin Books.

Kidd, S. M. (2003). *The secret life of bees.* New York City, NY: Penguin Books.

Lin, G. (2011). *Where the mountain meets the moon.* New York City, NY: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.

Lunge-Larsen, L. & Preus, M. (2004). *The legend of the lady slippers: An Ojibwe tale*. New York City, NY: Houghton Mifflin.

Polacco, P. (1994). *Mrs. Katz and Tush*. New York City, NY: Dell Dragonfly Books.

Polacco, P. (1995). *Babushka's doll.* New York City, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Seated respondents: Books read during diversity course

Ahmed, Q. (2008). *In the land of invisible women: A female doctor's journey in the Saudi Kingdom.* Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc.

Bruchac, J. (2007). *Squanto's journey: The story of the first Thanksgiving.* New York City,NY: Harper Collins.

Choi, Y. (2003). *The name jar*. New York City, NY: Dell Dragonfly Books.

Coles, R. (2010). *The story of Ruby Bridges*. New York City, NY: Scholastic.

Curtis, C. P. (2000). *The Watsons go to Birmingham 1963*. New York City, NY: Laurel Leaf Publishing.

Martin, R. (1998). *The rough-face girl*. New York City, NY: Puffin Books.

McBride, J. (2006). *The color of water: A Black man's tribute to his White mother*. New York City, NY: Riverhead Books.

McKissack, P. (1997). *Mirandy and Brother Wind*. New York City, NY: Dragonfly Books.

Mora, P. (2009). *Book fiesta! Celebrate children's day.* [bilingual]. New York City, NY: Rayo, an Imprint of HarperCollins.

Neihardt, J. G. (1988). *Black Elk speaks*: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Park, L. S. (2011). *A long walk to water*. New York City, NY: HarperCollins.

Pinkney, A. D. (2006). *Duke Ellington:* The Piano Prince and His Orchestra. New York City, NY: Hyperion.

Salbi, Z. (2006). *Between two worlds:* Escape from Tyranny: Growing Up in the Shadow of Saddam. New York City, NY: Gotham.

Soto, G. (1997). *Chato's kitchen*. New York City, NY: Puffin Books.

Books read after class by seated students:

Erdrich, L. (2004). *Tracks*. New York City, NY: Harper.

Flake, S. G. (1998). *The skin I'm in.* New York City, NY: Jump at the Sun Hyperion.

Kingston, M. H. (1989). *The woman warrior: Memoir of a girlhood among ghosts*. New York City, NY: Vintage.

Lin, G. (2011). *Where the mountain meets the moon.* New York City, NY: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.

Munoz Ryan, P. (2002). *Esperanza rising*. New York City, NY: Scholastic.

Na, A. (2003). *A step from heaven*. New York City, NY: Speak, an Imprint of Penguin.

Spiegelman, A. (1992). *Maus II: A survivor's tale*. New York City, NY: Pantheon.

Wiles, D. (2005). *Freedom summer*. New York City, NY: Aladdin.

APPENDIX C
Websites for Culturally-Diverse Literature

African American

- Coretta Scott King: http://www.ala.org/emiert/cskbookawards
- National African American Read-In Sponsored by the Black Caucus of NCTE/4Cs:
- Supplemental List for Young Children: http://www.ncte.org/library/ NCTEFiles/Involved/Action/AARI/Young_Children.pdf
- National African American Read-In Sponsored by the Black Caucus of NCTE/4Cs:
- Supplemental List for Young Adults and Adults: http://www.ncte.org/ library/NCTEFiles/Involved/Action/AARI/Young_Adults_Adults.pdf
- Black History: Latin America & the Caribbean: http://www. colorincolorado.org/read/forkids/blackhistory_latin/

American Indian

- American Indian Youth Literature Award: http://ailanet.org/activities/ american-indian-youth-literature-award/
- American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage: http://www. colorincolorado.org/read/forkids/aihm/
- Joseph Bruchac, Storyteller & Writer: http://josephbruchac.com/
- Louise Erdrich's Birchbark Books: http://birchbarkbooks.com/

Asian Pacific American

- Asian Pacific American Librarians Association: http://www.apalaweb. org/awards/literature-awards/winners/
- Books about Asian Pacific American Heritage: http://www. colorincolorado.org/read/forkids/asianpacific/

Hispanic/Latino/a

- Pura Belpré Award: http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpremedal
- Américas Book Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature: http://www4.uwm.edu/clacs/aa/index.cfm
- The Legacy of Cesar Chavez: http://www.colorincolorado.org/read/forkids/cesar_chavez/
- Latinas Who Made a Difference: http://www.colorincolorado.org/read/forkids/women/
- Children's Books About Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo: http://www.colorincolorado.org/read/forkids/diego_frida/
- Fiestas and Festivals: http://www.colorincolorado.org/read/forkids/fiesta/
- Hispanic Heritage Booklists: http://www.colorincolorado.org/read/forkids/hhm/

BRIDGING CULTURES THROUGH LITERACY: IMPACTING TEACHER EDUCATION

Bridging the Stories of Experience: Preservice Teachers Revise Their Thinking about Writing and the Teaching of Writing in an Undergraduate Literacy Course

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Abstract

This manuscript shares the insights of university faculty members as they worked with one class of preservice teachers to understand their attitudes about writing and the teaching of writing during the spring 2014 semester. Faculty members attempted to meet the writing needs of these preservice teachers discovered through their open-ended questionnaires, personal writing logs, and informal by using the Writing Workshop as an instructional approach. Findings suggest that employing Writer's Workshop enhanced these preservice teachers' writing confidence about their writing skills, provided opportunities for preservice teachers to experience for themselves the benefits,

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and because of it, were able to see themselves as successful writers and teachers of writing by the end of the semester.

Introduction

Preservice teachers sometimes believe they are unequipped as writers and as future teachers of writing when they begin their professional careers. Some possible reasons for these perceived deficiencies include perceptions about their own writing abilities, experiences as writers when they were students in K-12 classrooms, or beliefs about skills (i.e., grammar instruction, spelling instruction, editorial commentary) they need to master to be effective writing teachers. In their experience, writing has been a mode to answer assessment questions or to display language proficiency. In other words, preservice teachers hold limited experience using writing as a meaning-making tool (Gee, 2005; Wells, 1985), as reflective practice (Hover, 1994), or as a way to expand understanding about what they learn (Emig, 1977).

Gillespie (2005) argues that, "writing [as teachers] is the best way for us to establish our own expertise, to be able to figure out on our own answers to difficult issues of teaching writing" (p. 4). The reality is that all teachers need more experience writing themselves for different purposes and for multiple reasons (Emig, 1983) to build stamina and expertise. Inviting preservice teachers to experience approaches that help children to write more fluently and look at their writing more critically is what teacher education programs should strive to accomplish. It is then that teaching writing will go from being a frustration to the most rewarding part of teaching (Paesano, 2005).

In this investigation, the focus was on understanding more about the preservice teachers' previous writing opportunities, their perceptions and abilities as writers, their ongoing professional development about teaching writing, and the benefits that go along with using Writing Workshop as an instructional approach with them in one literacy course. To guide our investigation the following inquiry questions: were used

- Do preservice teachers' perceptions about their personal writing abilities change during an undergraduate literacy class when using Writing Workshop as an instructional approach?
- Do preservice teachers' perceptions about their ability to teach writing change during an undergraduate literacy class when using Writing Workshop as an instructional approach?
- What are the benefits and challenges of implementing Writing Workshop as an instructional approach in an undergraduate literacy class?

Writing and the Teaching of Writing

Early in its history, writing and the teaching of writing went through several paradigmatic shifts (writing as a product, writing as a tool, writing as a process, writing in context). Since the 1980s, literacy experts (Gee, 2005; Wells, 1985) attest that writing is also a tool for meaning making. In this perspective, writing is seen as a tool that builds on/from a student's identity and what matters is how writing aids students' understanding. Meaning making depends on the writer's context, experiences, knowledge, and cognitive abilities. In classroom settings, teachers and their students can be writing collaborators, where the instruction focuses on inquiry and invention, and where the quality of learning can become transformational for students and teachers. Today, writing and its instruction needs to balance product and process to improve meaning making. In our opinion, writing and its instruction needs focus on creating 21st century thinkers using 21st century tools. Thus, it is important that teacher education programs plan activities that will help preservice teachers begin to develop a deep knowledge base about the teaching of writing and also engage them in activities that will help them develop a love for writing.

Writing Workshop

Writing Workshop (Calkins, 1994; Calkins 2006) as an instructional approach has some history in K-12 settings (Anderson, 2007; Atwell, 1998; Gallagher, 2006; Graves, 1994), but it is not widely used in undergraduate classrooms. Its purpose is to set the conditions for students to become lifelong writers by allowing them to experience writing within a consistent process, where they write about authentic topics that they care about, and ultimately develop into successful strong writers.

The components of Writing Workshop include mini-lessons, independent writing time, conferring time, and constructive feedback from peers and mentor teachers (Tompkins, 2011). Mini-lessons, typically, are direct teaching lessons about a topic that relate to improving writing or the content students are learning or relate to a topic the mentor teacher notices needs immediate attention. During independent writing, students write on their own and ask for help from mentor teachers whenever the need. Conferring is at "the heart of our teaching" (Calkins, 1994, p. 182); its purpose is for students and teachers to have one-on-one conversations opportunities for open discussions about their work. Constructive feedback from peers and mentor teachers happen through the workshop and can be scripted in by mentor teachers or can happen "on the run" as students engage in their work.

Methods

This investigation is a qualitative, naturalistic study as it seeks to understand, explore, and act on an immediate issue in classroom practice.

Study Design

Action research (Pine, 2008; Stringer 2007) is the primary research approach we implement with this study. This approach is particularly helpful in education settings (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993) to understand an issue and then take action. We use this approach because our study seeks to "intervene in a deliberate way in a situation in order to bring about changes, even better, improvements in practice" (Burns, 2007, p. 2). In addition, we use survey design (Fowler, 2008) to collect data. More specifically, we use questionnaires to allow the participants in this study to provide self-reports about their thoughts, opinions, and feelings toward their ability to personally read and write, as well as their ability to teach K-6 students reading and writing. Although, self-reported data has some limitations (Korostoff, 2010) we determined that this approach was the most effective and least disruptive way to access the necessary data to improve the course.

Setting

This study takes place at a medium size university (13,000 students) in the southwest. Typically, students who attend this university are from rural and suburban communities, who are recent graduates of local junior colleges. In our study, most of these preservice teachers are seeking a Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies in Elementary Education with English as a Second Language (ESL) Certification.

Participants

The participants in this study were 32 preservice teachers enrolled in a required reading course. Of the 32 participants, 29 were female and 3 were male. The ethnicity of the participants included: one African American, four Hispanic, and 27 Caucasian. The majority of the preservice teachers were traditional students as they were under the age of 25.

Reading Methods Course

This course is the final reading class in a series of three. The class met twice a week for 15 weeks for one hour fifteen minutes per class period. The course description is as follows:

> *This literacy course builds on the theoretical foundations of reading and literacy presented in the previous courses (Reading and Literacy I and*

Word Analysis Skills). The preservice teacher will explore how to integrate school reading and writing instruction. The focus of this course is an examination of how the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) can be implemented with basal readers, trade books, literature, cognition, reading comprehension, comprehension strategies, formal assessments, and informal assessment strategies.

Instrumentation

Four questionnaires were designed, distributed, and transcribed during the spring 2014 semester. The questionnaires were distributed and collected during week one, six, thirteen, and fifteen. The responses were compiled and distributed to the preservice teachers during week two, seven, fourteen, and sixteen. As this was a formative assessment, it was important that the preservice teachers be able to see their growth (William, 2010).

To gather data that was simultaneously valid and reliable, several ideas were taken into consideration: how (face-to face) and when (during class) to collect data, the amount of writing the preservice teachers were asked to complete, the wording of the questions (basic/reflective), the order (in the same order we covered the content in class), the format (open-ended questions), the structure, and the visual layout (plenty of white space). To ensure that the data collected were valid, o the preservice teachers were asked about their responses both after the questionnaires were collected and when the results were distributed. Sometimes, the preservice teachers were asked one-on-one about their individual responses to elicit clarifications to ensure making accurate interpretations. Questions were asked similar to, "You wrote…tell me more about that..."

To ensure that the data collected were reliable, information was consistently elicited from preservice teachers about content covered in class or information that was easily accessible to them as they answered the questions. At the beginning of the semester, the preservice teachers were told about the intended study and write-up and that they could opt out of the study at anytime, which meant they opted out of letting their data be used but not out of the writing assignments. s. At the end of the semester, all the preservice teachers agreed that their data could be used.

Procedures

Step 1.   During the first week of class, the questionnaire was administered and collected. Next, using quickwrites (Graves & Kittle, 2005), the preservice teachers were asked to write and discuss their experiences as writers and as future teachers of writing. about the preservice teachers were told about the class layout

and its purpose. They were told about the purpose of their four to six person groups. Using the *Where I am From* (Lyon, 1999) structure, the preservice teachers crafted a poem of their own and shared it through read aloud with their groups.

Step 2.   The second week of class, preservice teachers read and discussed the components of Writing Workshop (status of the classroom, mini-lessons, independent writing, sharing, and reading aloud) and the writing process (brainstorming, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing). This is important, as this is the primary instructional approach (Tompkins, 2011) that was used to cover the content and objectives throughout the semester. A typical day began with 1) a brief introduction of the day's topic and objectives, 2) a status of the classroom discussion, 3) a 15-20 minute mini-lesson, 4) independent writing time focusing on the lesson of the day, and 5) ended with sharing new ideas or takeaways from the day.

As preservice teachers wrote, the first author conferred with them individually to discuss the status of their work, answered questions, and provided verbal feedback. See Table 1 for a list of weekly writing activities and their purpose.

Step 3.   During the third week of class, the preservice teachers began to work on a class anthology of personal narratives. Using Writing Workshop they brainstormed, drafted, and edited stories that had personal meaning to them. At the end of each day, the preservice teachers shared their rough drafts aloud with members in their writing groups. This process was used during the fourth and fifth week. During the fifth week, a few preservice teachers volunteered to read their story aloud to the whole class.

Step 4.   The second questionnaire was administered and collected during the sixth week of class.

Step 5.   To ensure preservice teachers read deeply and made connections to the text, preservice teachers were asked to document their learning using reading logs (Tompkins, 2011). Preservice teachers used these logs to guide conversations during the mini-lessons and sharing time. This writing-to-learn activity allowed preservice teachers "a place to think on paper" (Robb, 2003, p. 274). Preservice teachers submitted five logs for grading on these topics: 1) reading comprehension, 2) reading and writing that builds fluency, 3) independent reading and writing, 4) demands of fiction and non-fiction, and 5) reading and writing instruction for English learners.

Step 6.   The main purpose of the reading log was to elicit questions preservice teachers want to pursue and to help them organize information as they read in preparation for a culminating "How To" writing assignment. The main

TABLE 1
Writing Artifacts

Artifact(s)	Week(s)	Genre(s)	Purpose
Questionnaire	1, 6, 13, 15	Informational/ Biographical	To gauge perceptions and help design instruction
Where I am From	1	Poetry	A tool to get to know students' histories
Class Anthology	3, 4, 5	Personal Narrative	A way to use the writing workshop approach by writing about a topic of their choice
Reading Log (Five)	4, 5, 6, 12, 14	Informational	A tool to encourage reflective practice
Literature Circles (Products to share with classmates)	13, 14	Multiple Genre	An opportunity to create a product beyond an essay to show their learning
Literacy Profile	12	Informational/ Biographical	A way to practice writing literacy assessment results
How to	6, 14, 15	Personal/ Biographical/ Informational	A tool to synthesize findings about a literacy topic of their choice and then explain how they might implement it in their future classroom
Quickwrites	Weekly	All Genres	A tool to informally jot down their thoughts
6+ 1 Trait Rubrics (Education Northwest, 2015)	12	Informational	A tool to score the writing of their literacy profiles
Peer Review Forms	13, 15	Informational	To gauge engagement during team activities

purpose of the "How To" assignment was for preservice teachers to research a topic on their own, write about what they found, and then explain their findings using a narrative "How To" writing.

Step 7.   During the twelfth week of class, the preservice teachers met in small groups to discuss and draft assessment literacy profiles. The students were given a mentor text to help them with structure, length, and appropriate information to include. The assessment writing profile included student background, phonics and comprehension assessment instruments, findings summary, and recommendations for parents, teachers, and students. To complete this literacy profile the preservice teachers administered a spelling inventory (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnson, 2014) and an informal reading inventories (Shanker & Cockrum, 2013).

Step 8.   The third questionnaire was administered and collected during the thirteenth week. Each small group of preservice teachers delivered a 5-minute presentations about their literacy profile. That is, they provided a summary of their findings about the student's ability to read and write and shared recommendations about how to help their student achieve higher literacy levels. Discussion and questions followed each presentation.

Step 9.   During weeks thirteen and fourteen, preservice teachers worked in Literature Circles (Daniels, 2002) where they discussed Guided Reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). The task was to discuss, in a small group, their "take-aways," and present them to the class. Preservice teachers were graded based on teamwork, content knowledge, and presentation skills.

Step 10.   During the fifteenth week, the final questionnaire was administered and collected. The main purpose of this questionnaire was to gauge their comfort level as writers and teachers of writing. Preservice teachers spoke in groups about their "How To" and the published class anthology was distributed.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was ongoing throughout the spring 2014 semester as one of the purposes of this study was to take immediate action. Data collected were organized by student, day of questionnaire, and assignments. Analysis during the collection phase consisted of transcribing, note taking, and noticing patterns to improve instructional practices. This process involved arranging the data, searching for patterns about writing and its instruction, and then recording them to faculty notebooks. After the questionnaires were collected, they were transcribed using Microsoft Office and then transferred to Microsoft Excel. Two faculty members read through the comments and notes multiple times to understand the comments and take action. For this analysis, the faculty members focused on noticing comments pertaining to writing and its instruction. To achieve triangulation (Merriam, 1988), the faculty members read the comments separately, made a list of their own findings, and then convened as a group to reach a consensus. Interpretations were then shared with preservice teachers and modifications were made to interpretations.

Findings

At the start of the semester, the undergraduate students' experiences mirrored the "product" perspective (Tompkins, 2011). Their learning experiences about writing from their elementary and secondary years primarily focused on grammar,

punctuation, and language form. As a result, they were fixated on word counts, page lengths, and due dates. They equated writing ability to proper punctuation and proper grammar. As a consequence, those preservice teachers, who saw themselves as grammarians, stated they were good writers, and those, who saw themselves as poor spellers, saw themselves as poor writers.

In this class, the preservice teachers reported that they seldom wrote multiple drafts of assignments. They reported that the writing assignments they submitted for grades were oftentimes first drafts and according to them, the work earned high marks. Therefore, they said they spent little time revising and editing. As a consequence, they encountered constructive feedback with outward resistance. Many said that their editing and revising experiences came from practicing for the state assessments. While most the preservice teachers eventually welcomed doing multiple drafts and seeing its benefits, there were still three preservice teachers who refused to revisit their work.

By the end of the semester, the Writing Workshop approach assisted preservice teachers in becoming more confident writers. In addition, the Writing Workshop approach provided an avenue for preservice teachers to give and receive feedback from others in a non-threatening manner and created positive experiences about the rewriting process. These experiences built preservice teachers' writing abilities and gave them more confidence in their ability to write and even to teach writing.

First Questionnaire—Getting a Sense of Preservice Teacher Self-Perceptions

In the first survey (during week one), the preservice teachers were asked to report their beliefs about how equipped they felt as writers. The responses ranged from "I am a great writer," "I am an average writer," to "I really don't like to write so I would say I am at the lower end." During discussion time, some preservice teachers said they were not good writers because they felt they lacked spelling and did not feel comfortable with punctuation rules. The preservice teachers who said they were good writers said that they were good spellers and could compose effective sentences. They said grammar and its instruction was the primary focus during their elementary and secondary years. None of the preservice teachers mentioned conveying and supporting ideas with details, using writing to engage in conversations with someone else, using writing to learn about topics, or using writing to persuade.

In the first survey, the preservice teachers were asked to report their beliefs on their preparedness to be future teachers of writing. They said, "I feel more

prepared as a reading teacher than as a writing teacher," "I am not real confident on my ability to teach writing," and, "I could be a great writing teacher because I value punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, spelling, and vocabulary. [But] I hate to write." These responses were not surprising—until this semester, writing and its instruction was used sporadically in only a few undergraduate courses; and when writing was assigned, it was seen as a "product" to turn in (i.e., lesson plans, 5 paragraph essays), not as a reflective exercise or as a meaning-making activity.

With the first survey, the preservice teachers were asked to discuss their writing influences. They said their writing influences were family, authors they had read, and high school English teachers who had taken the time to work with them on a one-on-one basis. As we discussed their responses, preservice teachers said they were now planning to focus on building parent/teacher relationships and were planning on becoming writing influences themselves as their teachers were for them.

Second Questionnaire — Gauging Progress

With the second survey (during week six), the preservice teachers were asked to revisit their comfort level and preparedness with writing and its instruction. By now, preservice teachers were knowledgeable about writing workshop, writing as a mode for learning, and writing as a reflective practice. Typical preservice teachers' responses were, "I feel more prepared, but I still have a lot more to learn, "I am becoming more comfortable, doing the activities in class has really helped," and "I don't feel like I am fully prepared to step in the classroom, but I feel like I have learned more ways to implement reading and writing in the classroom." These responses suggested that learning to write and to teach writing is as an ongoing process that was not yet complete. Preservice teachers felt that working alongside other preservice teachers and the teacher faculty member (first author) aided them in their writing development and in their comprehension of course material.

Third Questionnaire - Gauging Preservice Teacher Beliefs about Informational Writing

With the third survey (during week thirteen), the preservice teachers were asked to discuss their comfort level with informational writing. Typical responses were, "This was difficult for me. I feel like a lesson on this would be beneficial" and "This was a little harder for me, because I did not understand all the information I was writing about." Follow up conversations suggested that preservice teachers were familiar administering literacy assessments but did not have adequate practice reporting scientific results. Looking back, it was realized that a mini-lesson to model reporting scientific results was necessary, as preservice teachers need more

practice synthesizing data and modeling about how to write scientific results. In addition, preservice teachers need more instruction in informational literacy.

Fourth Questionnaire — Final Thoughts and Wrapping up with a Grand Conversation

With the fourth survey (during week fifteen), the preservice teachers were asked to report their comfort level as writers and teachers of writing. One student wrote, "As a writer, I feel extremely comfortable with my own abilities. Before this semester, I had little confidence in my ability to teach these skills. Now, I feel that I am considerably more comfortable and could teach writing. I think it's an ongoing process and my skills will develop as I practice more." Another student stated, t "I feel much more confident now than before the class because of the various mini-lessons that built my understanding and then the assignments that made us practice the learned skill. Now, that I know I can write, I will do the best I can." Finally, a preservice teacher stated, "I feel a lot more comfortable as a teacher of writing than I did at the beginning of the semester. I know there is much more to learn and some things only experience can teach me."

The first and second comment suggest that confidence in respect to preservice teachers' own abilities as writers and teachers of writing was considerably better at the end of the semester. Preservice teachers said that the writing workshop approach allowed them to engage in meaningful conversations with group members about their work. They also felt that the constructive feedback their group members gave them was specific and improved their writing quality. Moreover, they said that being able to receive and provide constructive feedback to other preservice teachers helped them to realize their own expertise and teaching abilities.

The comments also suggest that preservice teachers felt more at ease teaching writing by the end of the semester. When discussing the survey with the preservice teachers, they said that there was still plenty to learn about including writing workshop, thinking beyond grammar instruction, and working with English learners. The writing workshop approach set the conditions for preservice teachers to seek immediate answers to their questions about what they were writing, allowed them to experience writing constructively, and gave them a clear idea about how to implement this instructional approach to the future.

Implications – Taking Informed Action

Writing will continue to be integrated into the reading course next semester. However, several topics will be revisited to enhance the learning experience for the preservice teachers. First, many preservice teachers wish they learn more

about supporting English language learners, students with dyslexia, and learning ways to integrate writing workshop with in special education settings. To do so, other reading faculty members in our department will be meeting to align the teaching of these topics beyond one course.

At the beginning of the semester some of the preservice teachers felt unequipped because they lacked language mechanics and form as they wrote. They focused on grammar, punctuation, and sentence fluency. They frequently asked for mentor texts or other resources to help them reset their thinking about teaching conventions, voice, ideas, and sentence fluency. Moving forward, more access to additional mentor texts from authors like Graves (1994), Murray (1990), Calkins (1994), Atwell (1998), Daniels (2002), Kittle (2008), Anderson (2005; 2007), Heard and McDonough (2009) and Bernabei, Hover and Candler (2009) will be provided.

Informational writing was very difficult and sometimes overwhelming for these preservice teachers to complete. This was especially true when they wrote their literacy profiles. They found it difficult to write the findings and the implication section was ignored. Instead of reporting the facts (i.e., Mary read at 125 words per minute) they wrote, "Mary read fast." Or they would write, "Johnny was a poor reader," instead of writing, "Johnny's instructional level is two years behind." Moving forward, several different mini-lessons will be added, such as how to write findings accurately and how to develop an implication section, as this is not a writing style they have experienced in the past or in the K-12 classroom.

Because sometimes preservice teachers come to our classes with a wealth of narrative writing experience in the K-12 classroom and less content area writing, next semester, expository writing will be taught more explicitly. It is hoped that by modeling expository informational writing through Writer's Workshop will show preservice teachers that writing about what they are learning provides for a better learning experience and a deeper understanding of the content knowledge for students.

In addition, three quizzes throughout the semester will be administered to help guide our instruction, gauge learning, and invite preservice teachers to see for themselves how much they really understand. In addition, these assessments will be used to help preservice teachers learn how to use assessment to plan instruction.

Finally, it is important to invite other faculty members to integrate writing assignments and components of Writing Workshop into their courses. All faculty members will be encouraged to include writing assignments in their courses to help preservice teachers learn that writing is a meaning-making tool that promotes

deeper understanding of the content taught. Integrating writing to make meaning is important if preservice teachers are to see themselves as competent writers and teachers of writing as they enter their professional teaching careers.

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Inside View: A Look At Literature Circles From The Preservice Teacher's Perspective

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigated preservice students' attitudes and beliefs regarding the use of literature circles as an instructional strategy, the transfer of the strategy from the college classroom to the field, and the impact of prior instruction on their attitudes and beliefs. Twenty-nine preservice teachers participated in the study during their methods literacy course in the fall of 2013. Data revealed a strong positive correlation between how the preservice teachers were instructed in elementary school and what they believed was good instruction. Additionally, preservice teachers experienced positive changes in both their attitudes and their beliefs towards the use of literature circles when they engaged in active participation with this instructional strategy.

Introduction

Preservice teachers' personal beliefs and experiences are the foundations they will use to make classroom decisions regarding their instruction (Barnyak, & Paquette, 2010; Fang, 1996). Fang (1996) posits that educators often teach in the manner they were taught (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Knowledge about teaching and learning offered in university course work may be quite different from past experiences of the preservice teachers (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Joram &

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Gabriele, 1998). Naïve beliefs or those without theoretical knowledge may be strongly held by students entering the teacher education program. Not addressed, these naïve beliefs may persist and influence teaching negatively in their future classroom (Brownlee, Dart, Boulton-Lewis, & McCrindle, 1998; Pajares, 1992).

Teacher education programs are challenged to assist preservice teachers to confront and examine deeply held beliefs and views of teaching and learning from their own classroom experiences. Pre-existing beliefs from early schooling are difficult to change and may endure through the teacher education program if not confronted (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Pajares, 1992). Because learning is situated in context, lectures and readings will not prepare preservice teachers to connect theory to best practices (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 2008; Korthagen et al., 2006; Wolf, Carey, & Mieras, 1996). Instead the learning experiences of preservice teachers should be embedded in teaching practice that aligns with and models theoretical and pedagogical beliefs (Tryggvason, 2009). It is crucial that preservice teachers examine beliefs from their own experiences as students in the classroom, become aware of teaching and learning theories examined in teacher education, and reflect on practice teaching experiences to expand and own their knowledge, skills, and attitudes in their own future classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2008; Day & Ainsley, 2008; Grisham & Wolsey, 2011; Korthagen et al., 2006; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Pajares, 1992; Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2004; Tryggvason, 2009).

Educational preparation program faculty members should evaluate their teaching practices and model the practices they promote in their methods courses (Korthagan & Kessels, 1999; Tryggvason, 2009). Preservice teachers taught with lecture methods and the teacher as the authority holding all the right answers will typically rely on those same methods in their own teaching practice (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In order for preservice teachers to learn theory and relate it to student-centered practices, they must experience those practices as students, make connections to theory, design lessons correlated to theory, and reflect on the success of those lessons (Brownlee, et al., 1998; Korthagan & Kessels, 1999). Learning and teaching experiences and reflective practice are tools that assist preservice teachers to make sense of their developing identities as teachers and negotiate their role in the classroom and teaching (Niemi, 2002; Tryggvason, 2009). In addition to developing their identities as teachers, they also have to confront their identities as readers.

The Peter Effect

Often our preservice teachers are alliterate; they are capable of reading, but choose not to (Beers, 1996). Many times we encounter preservice teachers who do not enjoy reading for pleasure. Therefore, they struggle with being able to share an

enthusiasm for reading with their own students (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). Applegate and Applegate (2004) coined the term for those students as the "Peter Effect" (p. 556). The Peter Effect refers to the Apostle Peter saying "he could not give what he did not have" (Applegate & Applegate, 2004, p. 556).

Kolloff (2002) surveyed 246 undergraduate students regarding their reading interests and habits and discovered that 42% of the students were currently not reading anything for pleasure. In addition to the undergraduate survey, she also surveyed 163 graduate students, who were primarily inservice elementary and secondary teachers (Kolloff, 2002). The data determined that 28% were not currently reading for pleasure (Kolloff, 2002). Kolloff (2002) determined that in order to motivate students to read, teachers needed to be their models.

Using the Literacy Habits Questionnaire (LHQ) survey designed by Applegate & Applegate (2004), Nathanson, Pruslow, & Levitt, surveyed 747 education graduate students who were either currently teachers or were working on their certification (2008). What they discovered when they asked participants to rate their enjoyment of reading on a 5 point scale was that 47% of the students labeled themselves as enthusiastic readers (Nathanson et al., 2008). Additionally, their evidence from the question "Did you have a teacher who shared a love of reading" supported that the teacher was a factor in promoting motivation to read (Nathanson et al., 2008).

In a follow-up study, Applegate et al. (2014) surveyed 1,025 college sophomores, of which 348 were educator majors or preservice teachers. The data from preservice teachers revealed that 51.1% of the students could be rated as enthusiastic readers. In light of these results we decided to model and use literature circles to both support preservice teachers in their future teaching practice as well as potentially change their own personal reading practices.

Literature Circles

There is an abundant body of research that has focused on the benefit of using peer led small group discussion of a chosen book (Daniels, 2006; Gilles, Dickinson, McBride, & Vandover, 1994; Sancore, 2013). According to Daniels, (2002), literature circles are small groups of students reading the same article, book, or novel that come together to discuss what they gleaned reading the text. These small groups provide students the ability to participate in both independent reading and collaborative learning. The teacher introduces a limited selection of books and allows students to choose the book that interest them. Small groups are formed around these book choices (Burns, 1998; Daniels, 2002). As a supplement to the reading program in a literature-based class (Fink, 2003) books are

chosen for enjoyment and pleasure reading, books that students cannot wait to get back to reading, not books that require extensive interpretation or heavy symbolism (Burns, 1998). Given a deadline for finishing the book, groups meet making decisions about the volume of text to read prior to participating in regularly scheduled meetings for discussion (Daniels, 2002; Peralta-Nash & Dutch, 2000). Previous introduced roles, such as Summarizer, Questioner, Connector, Illustrator, Word Finder, and Literary Luminary, are chosen by students, or assigned, that will facilitate conversation (Brabham & Villaume, 2000; Burns, 1998; Daniels, 2002; Gilbert, 2000). Roles can be assigned for the duration of the book or changed during the reading of the book (Burns, 1998). The procedure, routines, and forms of the literature circle can vary depending on the teacher and students' needs, yet, all literature circles should be heterogeneous, student choice of reading, and student discussions where participants initiate the conversation and learning (Brabham & Villaume, 2000; Daniels, 2002).

This instructional strategy provides readers the opportunity to think critically about literature, to immerse and enjoy themselves in a book, construct meaning and explore with others what was learned, reflect on and encourage group members to respond through reflection and evaluation of the text (Batchelor, 2012; Daniels, 2002, 2006; Gilles et al., 1994). Students are given the opportunity to interact and interpret during literature circles (Wiencek & O'Flahavan, 1994). As readers respond with support and evidence from the text, they move to critical thinking and deeper meaning, unlike the traditional teacher initiated questions and knowledge level student responses (Blum, Lipsett, & Vocom, 2002; Daniels, 2006; Gilles et al., 1994; Sanacore, 2013). These peer led discussions provide learners with choice, social integration, motivation, and support for reading which leads to empowerment of student choice and student thinking (Blum et al., 2002).

Literature Circles can contribute to creating a community of readers where readers feel safe and valued allowing them to take risks and share in the construction of meaning and the possibility of different interpretations (King, 2001; Peralta-Nash & Dutch, 2000). As students participate in literature circles they begin to take on more responsibility for their own learning, searching for textual evidence for interpretations (King, 2001). Literature circles have the ability to engage students in authentic life experiences (Long & Gove, 2004; Peralta-Nash & Dutch, 2000). In our attempt to bridge theory and practice, to engage both our literate and alliterate preservice teachers, and potentially change our preservice teachers' beliefs about reading instruction, we decided to provide an authentic experience of constructing deep understandings of a shared text and reading pedagogy through Literature Circles.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify whether preservice teachers' beliefs about reading instruction change after participating in a model of reading instruction that includes Literature Circles. The following research questions were addressed in this qualitative study:

1. What were the elementary education preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs about the use of literature circles as part of teaching a balanced literacy program before participating in a literature circle with their reading course work?

2. What were the elementary education preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs about the use of literature circles as part of teaching a balanced literacy program after participating in a literature circle with their reading course work?

3. How did the use of literature circles in a literacy methods class inform elementary preservice teachers' reading attitudes and practices as future teachers?

Methods

Participants

The participants involved in this study were 29 preservice teachers enrolled in a literacy methods course in the fall of 2013. There were 28 female students and one male student ranging between the ages of 20 and 47. Seventeen of the participants identified themselves as Early Childhood (EC) to Grade 6 certification, three as EC to Grade 12 Special Education, three as Bilingual Generalist, and six participants did not answer. Additionally, three students were African-American, one student was Asian, 12 students were Caucasian, and 13 students were Hispanic. Finally, 23 of the participants had taken previous classes in reading instruction. In order to maintain confidentiality all names used are pseudonyms.

Procedures

The criteria for participant selection were (a) enrollment in a literacy methods class, and (b) willingness to participate in the study. One student declined participation in the study. Participants were given a survey via a Google form, see appendix A, to complete prior to the literature circle study. Participants met four times in their literature circles, two face-to-face during class time, and two online either through Blackboard or Zoom.com, a video tool that allows participants to

TABLE 1
Literature Circle Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Summarizer	Prepare a brief summary of the current reading.
Questioner	Create questions for the group about the reading.
Connector	Find connections from the reading (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world).
Illustrator	Create a visual about the reading.
Word Finder	Identify meaningful words that are important to the reading.
Literary Luminary	Identify interesting pieces of text to read aloud.

TABLE 2
Preservice Students' Literature Circle Book Choices

Book Title	Author
Esperanza Rising	Pam Muñoz Ryan
Hoot	Carl Hiaason
Loser	Jerry Spinelli
Lunch Box Dream	Tony Abbott
Moon Over Manifest	Clare Vanderpool
Star Girl	Jerry Spinelli
Wonder	R. J. Palacio

meet online. Each meeting lasted approximately 20 to 25 minutes. During this time, students assumed different roles in the literature circles, such as Summarizer, Questioner, Connector, Illustrator, Word Finder (Word Wizard), and Literary Luminary, See Table 1 for a list of the roles and responsibilities (Daniels, 2002).

Prior to the beginning of literature circles, each instructor conducted a book chat to initiate interest in and to share the book choices with the participants (Table 2). After each literature circle session, participants completed a reflective writing (Appendix B). The questions gave them the opportunity to reflect on their experience in the literature circle from both a "student" and "teacher" point of view. Finally, the participants completed a final reflection at the conclusion of the study (Appendix C).

Data Collection and Analysis

This study used the following methods of data collection: (a) pre-survey, (b) post-reflective writing, (c) weekly reflective writings, and (d) video transcriptions. Data were collected prior to the start of literature circles, each week the preservice

teachers met in their literature circles, and the end of the semester. After the data were collected, a constant comparative method was utilized to analyze the data and search for themes within the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Results

Research Question 1

In the pre-survey, preservice teachers were asked the following: "Describe how you were taught literacy (reading/writing) in elementary school." and "List as many instructional strategies you would see in a balanced literacy classroom." Based on the data analysis from these two pre-survey questions, preservice teachers' literacy instruction in elementary school, guided their beliefs about quality instruction. Table 3 presents the responses regarding how they were taught literacy in elementary school. Phonics was the most stated instructional strategy by the preservice teachers while Accelerated Reader (AR) and literature circles were the least listed.

Research Question 2

Utilizing the data collected from each week's reflective writings (Appendix B) and the post-survey questions (Appendix C), four themes emerged from the data: (1) motivation, (2) social interaction, (3) freedom of thinking, and (4)

TABLE 3
Preservice Teachers' Elementary School Literacy Instructional Experiences

Instructional Strategy	*n*
Phonics	11
Writing stories	5
Read alouds	5
Small group instruction	4
Independent reading	4
Sight words	4
Comprehension	3
Vocabulary	2
Memorization of facts	2
Visits to the library	2
Accelerated Reader	1
Literature circles	1

TABLE 4
Themes from Transcriptions and Documents

Themes	*n*
Motivation	27
Social interaction	19
Freedom of thinking	19
Comprehension	14

comprehension. These factors contributed to the preservice teachers' experiences and beliefs that literature circles should be used as an instructional strategy in their classrooms to support reading instruction. See Table 4 below.

Motivation.   Motivation was the largest theme, which consisted of four subthemes: (a) interest, (b) pleasure, (c) choice, and (d) freedom. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) posit that reading motivation "is the individual's personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading" (p. 405). In order to increase motivation in reading for students, our preservice teachers need to demonstrate their motivation for reading (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Kolloff, 2002). This study allowed the preservice teachers to experience the factors that motivate children to read.

When you analyze the sub-themes, one conclusion that can be drawn, from the preservice teachers' responses, correlates with what researchers have found to be motivators for children too, especially choice (Allington & Gabriel, 2012; Gambrell, 1996; Miller, 2012). Our students who are most motivated to read want the freedom to choose what interests them, which in-turn gives them pleasure reading. Below in Table 5, preservice teachers' express how literature circles gave them motivation to read.

Freedom of Thinking.   Students were able to identify that participation in the literature circles afforded them freedom to discuss their own ideas and personal connections without their interpretations and feelings being judged.

- Alice enjoyed the "… freedom to do and talk about anything at all related to the book, it was just between us, what we talked about. The teacher wasn't constantly walking and asking 'So how's it going?' or 'How did this book make you feel?' or anything like that."

- Kasey stated, "…and [getting] to truly express how [I] feel about the book instead of being judged by a big group."

TABLE 5
Motivation Subthemes and Examples

Subtheme	Quotation
Interest	"read the same book with others who are interested in the topic" "get kids interested in reading" "It enhanced my interest in reading"
Pleasure	"feel more confident" "wanted to read" "increase aesthetic readers" "it was better than I imagined"
Choice	"pick your own book" "talk about what we wanted to talk about" "makes students enjoy reading because they choose their own book"
Freedom	"we didn't have to stop" "gets children to read" "I wanted to read, so I could be part of the discussion"

Readers bring background, experiences, and emotions to the book, which was brought out in written reflections by a majority of preservice teachers. Belinda noted that she was motivated to do the independent reading, "by discussing the events I got different points of views of the events and if I missed some detail I caught it in the discussion."

Hettie enjoyed "…responding to the book the way [I] wanted and give [my] opinion on why [I] thought events in the book happened for different reason." In addition, she responded with

> *It's good to have a literature circle because you get different points of view regarding how the story was; when you talk about the book with other classmates, then you might see something different than when you first read the book. It is good to express yourself about certain topics, and the book has great topics, for example, the book has lessons on moral, friendship, loyalty, and bullying.*

Preservice teacher were able to experience and make connections to the idea that meaning is constructed by the readers' interaction with the text so there is a range of acceptable responses and interpretations (Lysaker et al., 2011). This experience allowed for preservice teachers to experience a reading strategy where the readers choose a book, control the conversation and construct meaning through multiple views (Boyl, 2000; McKeown et al., 2009). Preservice teachers

moved the discussion through efferent and aesthetic views as the group decided rather than the teacher (Roseblatt, 1991).

Social interaction.   Learning is facilitated by social interaction, which influences cognitive outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2001; Grant & Guthrie, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978). In reflecting about literature circles, social interaction was mentioned 19 times as being significant in their interest of literature circles.

- In describing her enjoyment of participation in the literature circle Hettie wrote, "…[it] changed from being interesting learning more about literature circles to absolutely enjoying reading and coming to class to discuss what was read…"
- Another student, Sue stated that "I had grown to really enjoy our discussion about the book,…I enjoyed reading much more than ever before…"
- Jessica commented that "I enjoyed the literature circle and being able to meet with my group… and talk about what we read and discovered…". These statements support Daniels' (2002) position that students are aware of the engagement when participating and monitoring their own talk.
- Alice mentioned her excitement to talk about what was read, "It actually was pretty cool. … and [we] talk about what we wanted to talk about… I loved the social interaction… and talk about anything at all related to the book."

Comprehension.   Text does not exist passively with meaning; the reader interacts with the text to give it meaning (Berne & Clark, 2006; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Rosenblatt, 1982). According to the data, the preservice teachers felt that participating in the literature circles increased their comprehension of what they had read as seen in the comments:

- Kelly stated that working in literature circles helped "set a purpose for reading."
- Jackie, Sue, and Cindy reflected that literature circles helped them build their "critical thinking skills."
- Supporting the constructivist view that readers learn through engagement with the text Sally, Rachel, and Mili all concluded that

reading and discussing in literature circles "helps you understand the book better." Sue added to that by stating, "Literature circles guide students to deeper understand of what they read through structured discussion and extended writings in journals and artistic response."

Research Question 3

Twenty-eight out of the 29 preservice teachers in our course had not experienced literature circles as a student in school. From reading the preservice teachers' reflections, they enjoyed literature circles, were eager to use literature circles in their future classroom, and were aware of the benefits for their future students as seen in the comments:

- Alice's statement was common: "I enjoyed participating in [literature circles] and will be using them in my class!"

- Kacey expressed a benefit of literature circles was the opportunity to discuss in her group without the evaluation of 'correct' answers, "…and [I] get to truly express how [I] feel about the book instead of being judged by a big group."

- Hettie began the semester with some interest in the literature circles but never had participated in one. She went from "…being interested in learning more about these discussions and what [they are] all about" to "absolutely enjoying reading and coming to class to discuss what was read."

- Sue was hesitant at first, "I was leery for a while because I do not enjoy reading" but then "after my group met a few times I had grown to really enjoy our discussions about the book and looked forward to it every week. …I enjoy reading much more than ever before."

- Shelby, who demonstrated her enjoyment of listening to picture books verbally and through her body language, was just as enthusiastic about her experience in literature circles and added "…the best way to get kids interested in reading…a great way to get kids involved in reading… letting them have a book to self-connect. I love the ideas of literature circles in my classroom."

As preservice teachers participate in literature circles, listen to lectures, participate in class assignments, and produced written reflections researchers were able to see that they moved from naïve judgments to making connections with theory and their own future classrooms. Alice stated, "…[we] were able to

make a connection from the theory discussed in course work to the experience of literature circles." Diane expressed making connections with the theory of constructivism writing,

> *"…during literature circle I learned that when each student brings different ideas it keeps the readers interested, and it also helps construct knowledge. I believe the idea of literature circle is built on Vygotsky social constructivism theory, children actively participating in literature circle to construct knowledge."*

Hettie was able to identify "… it involves all the theories such as constructivism, social interaction, and reader response."

Preservice teachers expressed eagerness in using literature circles in future classrooms. Belinda believes that literature circles will increase students' interest in reading because they will want to be "involved in the discussion…I usually fall behind in reading and by participating in this literature circle I was on track because I loved the literature circle discussion." Diane realizes that literature circles can "create memorable moments when students can make a personal connection to the book and bring the book alive." To maintain the momentum of examining and adjusting their own beliefs teaching and learning to read, preservice teaches need to continue confronting their own beliefs as they are introduced to theories about learning and teaching. Further research is needed to examine if recognizing the change in their beliefs will be demonstrated in lesson planning in teaching practice.

Discussion and Conclusions

The results of this study confirmed the importance of preservice teachers' active participation in effective instructional strategies in order to transfer their learning to teach to their classroom instruction. Providing information and knowledge of research best practices alone will not impact reading instruction that creates change in personal beliefs about reading (Duffy & Atkinson, 2001; Putnam & Borko, 2000). Applegate & Applegate, (2004) implied that instructional experiences in teacher preparation have the ability to alter preservice teachers' reading beliefs. Building upon their work, this study provided preservice teachers with the experience in literature circles and opportunities to reflect on that experience as students and future teachers. Preservice teachers participated in selecting a book, determining the reading assignments prior to each discussion, and participated in discussion about the reading each week. Reflections were written about their

participation and what was gleaned from this experience and how it relates to their future practice as teachers. This experience provided a lens that preservice teachers can use in their future classroom to plan strategies for teaching reading.

Classroom teachers have a powerful influence on students' engaged reading (Allington & Johnston, 2000; Applegate & Applegate, 2004). Experiencing literature circles provided preservice teacher the opportunity to make adjustments to the lens in which they view teaching reading (Putnam & Borko, 2000). The experience of enjoying reading, which for some preservice teachers was rare, provided a basis for selecting literature circles as a strategy in their own classroom. Experiencing and reflecting on social interaction as a powerful learning strategy, freedom of discussion without judgment as a motivator, and the ability to make personal interpretations allow preservice teacher to choose not to be the authority on all literature discussions in their future classrooms. Preservice teachers should be given the opportunity to reflect and challenge their beliefs about their own reading habits rather than continuing the cycle of unengaged reading (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Day and Ainley, 2008; Duffy & Atkinson, 2001).

The reflections of the preservice teachers allowed examination of changes and attitudes about literature circles, reading for pleasure, and teaching reading that took place after participating in the literature circles. This is helpful for teacher educators in supervision and course design for future preservice teachers. The continued self-study of the teacher preparation programs/courses, teaching, expectations, and requirements can inform and improve the practices that will make significant impact on future teachers' integration of theory and practice into their reading instruction (Duffy & Atkinson, 2001; Putnam & Borko, 2000).

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Appendix A
Pre-Survey Reflection Questions

*Google Doc.

Student name
Certification
Other Reading classes (LLLS) taken prior to this class
Age
Male/female
Ethnicity

- Describe how you were taught literacy (reading/writing) in elementary

- List as many instructional strategies you would see in a balanced literacy classroom.

- Describe your literacy block in your future classroom. What would I see if I came to visit?

- Should teachers rely mainly on district or campus purchased reading resources to teach reading.

- Would you consider your early elementary school reading experiences with learning to read primarily positive, negative or neutral? Explain why

- When you consider the instruction in reading you received in school how much emphasis was placed:
  Upon remembering the details of what you read
  Your own reactions to or interpretations of what you read

Discussing your reaction and interpretations with classmates and or teacher
Completing assignments or reports associated with reading

- Did your experiences with reading at home different from your experiences at school? If so, how

- What is your level of enjoyment associated with reading, explain (associate with no enjoyment with reading; associate little enjoyment with reading; lukewarm; reading is ok but do not do it regularly; like reading not engaged in outside reading)

- What is authentic literature?

- Were any of your teachers or activities effective in sharing the love of reading? If so, please explain how.

Appendix B

Reflective Writing
Literature Circle Meeting #1 and #4

At the end of your literature circle reflect and respond to the following questions.

- What did you learn as a student utilizing literature circles?
- What did you learn as a "teacher" utilizing literature circles?
- Any other thoughts you would like to share about literature circles.

Appendix B

Reflective Writing
Literature Circle Meeting #2 and #3-On-line

At the end of your literature circle reflect and respond to the following questions.

- What did you learn as a student utilizing literature circles?
- What did you learn as a "teacher" utilizing literature circles?
- Any other thoughts you would like to share about literature circles.

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Appendix C
Literature Circles Final Reflection

At the completion of literature circles you will write a reflective paper. As you write think and respond about the learning from a candidate perspective and a future teacher perspective. Please be sure to respond to the following items.

- What were the benefits of participating in a literature circle?
- What were the cons of participating in a literature circle?
- How does participating in literature circles relate to the theories of learning discussed in class?
- How might you utilize literature circles in your future classroom?

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Restructuring an Early Literacy Methods Course: Using Virtual Field Experiences in a 7-week Hybrid Format

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Abstract

Field experiences are a key component in the preparation of preservice teachers. However, there are documented concerns with traditional field experiences. The goal of this study was to explore the use of virtual field experiences while restructuring a traditional early literacy course to a 7-week hybrid format. This case study employed qualitative tools and included 17 students who were enrolled in the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Program. Findings revealed students and instructors reporting advantages and challenges associated with using videos, although all agreed they would recommend them for future classes. The researchers offer five recommendations for teacher educators using virtual field experiences during literacy methods courses.

State Departments of Education commonly require preservice teachers seeking licensure to complete field experience hours in K-12 classrooms (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015). Generally, these field experiences occur in two ways: 1) during education methods courses, or 2) during the final year of residency/student teaching (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Providing appropriate and meaningful field experiences is typically more challenging for methods courses

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that occur in a variety of schools than a residency/student teaching placement that occurs in one (Greenberg, Pomerance, & Walsh, 2011; Kale & Whitehouse, 2012). As a result, teacher education programs are currently exploring new ways to provide relevant field experiences by developing hybrid courses and substituting virtual field experiences for on-site experiences in K-12 classrooms (Kennedy & Archambault, 2012). Since using videos in education courses is a relatively new initiative with a limited but growing body of knowledge, there is a need to learn more about the affordances and limitations associated with this practice (Kurz, Batarelo, & Middleton, 2009; Parent, 2012; Sherin & van Es, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

In an effort to identify the value and limitations of using virtual field experiences, our case study was designed to explore the use of videos as a tool for learning in an early literacy methods course. A fellowship was received to redesign a course in the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Program. This early literacy course was redesigned from a traditional 15-week face-to-face course to a 7-week hybrid course and substituted the traditional 12-hour K-4 classroom field experience with viewing, discussing, and reflecting on teaching videos. The study for this redesigned course was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the students' experiences with using videos in this course?
2. What are the students' perceptions of this format?
3. What are the instructors' experiences with using videos in this course?
4. What are the instructors' perceptions with using this format?
5. What are the key issues, approaches, and barriers with this model?

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Two intersecting models of teaching and learning guided this study. First, we embraced the apprenticeship model of teaching that delineates how novices can benefit from examples and actions of more experienced others (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989). Although there are various apprenticeship models, the goal for all is to transform students from "novices" to "experts." According to Collins, Brown, and Holum (1991), this transformation happens in a Cognitive Apprenticeship Model by 1) identifying the process of the task to learn and making it visible, 2) situating the task in an authentic context, and 3) varying the diversity of the situation and making comparisons between the common aspects.

In our study, preservice teachers used videos to observe experienced teachers model and demonstrate best practices in real classroom settings and compared their observations with what they were reading and implementing during their individual teaching.

Second, this study embraced a Reflective Practitioner Model (Schön, 1983) that grew from the work of learning theorists such as John Dewey and Jean Piaget. The Reflective Practitioner Model promotes and emphasizes the value of viewing, reflecting, and sharing one's thoughts and beliefs about teaching and learning with others. This higher level of understanding occurs because new insights are gained socially through the process of thinking more deeply about actions while embracing the expertise of others. In our study, a natural opportunity for pre-service teachers to develop and recognize a reflective stance occurred during their field experiences when they paid critical attention to both online "expert" teachers and to their own teaching in a specific context.

Challenges with traditional field-experiences. Challenges with traditional field experiences occur for several reasons. First, preservice teachers may find an on-site field experience challenging simply due to the sheer complexity of dealing with the dual tasks of teaching and learning at the same time (Wang & Hartley, 2003). Another challenge is connected to methods classes being taught independently; thus, an elementary education student might take a math, science, and literacy methods class in one semester. In addition to course time, students have a corresponding number of field experience hours that may occur in different schools. Attending different locations can be confusing, time intensive, and challenging for students, especially when a growing number of them work and go to school.

A particularly taxing challenge rests with placement officers in teacher education offices who have the responsibility for placing students in their field experience assignments. The coordination of these placements is dependent on the cooperation from local school districts. As a result, students frequently do not learn where they will complete their field experiences until after mid-semester. Therefore, it is impossible for students to visit classrooms on a weekly basis, which is the intent of most methods classes (Bliss & Reynolds, 2004). Adding to this concern, students who take 7-week courses need immediate access to classrooms or they cannot fulfill their field experience requirement. Equally concerning, there is no guarantee that students will actually view best practices when observing in the K-12 classroom setting. In fact, it is generally a hit-miss proposition that students will even see instruction occurring in the content area they are expected to view (Schrader et al., 2003; Simpson, 2006). Furthermore, schools with diverse student populations are often not readily available for traditional field placements (Lehman

& Phillion, 2004) and locating enough placement options that expose students to the best and most relevant practices or authentic ways to integrate technology into the literacy curriculum can also be difficult (Grable, Kiekel, & Hunt, 2009; Kale & Whitehouse, 2012; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2013).

   Using Virtual Field Experiences.   Although the types of video technology and research methodology vary among studies, researchers concur that virtual field experiences have many advantages over traditional or written case-based experiences. For example, researchers found that students were grateful for the opportunity to complete their field experience at any time of day in order to fit their demanding schedules without concern for school hours or geographic location (Beck, King, & Marshall, 2002; Hixon & Sanborn, 2005; Hughes, Packard, & Pearson, 2000). Other researchers (Hewitt, Pedretti, & Bencze, 2003; Knight, Pedersen, & Peters, 2004; Yadav, 2008) found students appreciated the focused discussions that occurred when the entire class viewed the same video. This shared group experience allowed students to discuss their views, state their opinions, and clarify misconceptions about specific viewing events with both peers and teacher educators. Baker (2005) reported that a majority of students in her study described group discussions as "a factor that contributed to their growth" toward becoming effective literacy teachers (p. 425). Additionally, video cases were beneficial in allowing students to observe exemplary teaching practices in real-life situations and gave them more confidence in their own ability to connect theory to practice (Berg, Jansen, & Blijleven, 2004; Teale, Leu, Labbo, & Kinzer, 2002).

   Researchers (Boling & Adams, 2008; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Star & Strickland, 2008) also agree that through video cases pre-service teachers are exposed to a wider array of live scenarios and culturally diverse classrooms and observe a variety of pedagogies and content in ways that a traditional field experience cannot afford. Additionally, Santagata, Zannoni, and Stigler (2007) specify that video cases allow students to select and review particular areas of interest and allow them to reflect in ways not possible during live observation. Hixon and So (2009) report that video technologies offer the unique ability to repeatedly review a given classroom scenario and, by viewing several videos, observe multiple perspectives on problem solving in similar circumstances.

Method

Setting and Participants

The course in this study, *Foundations of Literacy Development in Grades K-4,* was developed and co-taught in the fall semester 2013 by a literacy professor with 23 years of online and face-to-face teaching experience and a doctoral literacy

graduate assistant with 8 years K-12 teaching experience and two years of experience co-teaching at the university level. The course at this large Southeastern metropolitan university is required for students enrolled in the MAT Program who are working on their master's degrees and seeking initial teacher licensure in early childhood or elementary education.

The course, with 17 students enrolled, was offered for the first time as a hybrid course and for the first time in a 7-week format, meeting each week both face-to-face and online. During the weekly, three-hour face-to-face time, one topic of early literacy was discussed which related to students' required reading from the text, *Literacy in the early grades: A successful start for PreK-4 readers and writers* (Tompkins, 2011). That week's three-hour online component related to the same literacy topic and included one hour of assigned videos for students to view and two hours of associated scenarios and mini-assignments, online discussions, and self-reflections. The videos were selected from the textbook companion online materials purchased by the students and from online videos on two free websites: YouTube and TeacherTube. In addition, students selected one K-4 student of their choice to teach for one hour each week outside of school hours. Lessons for these children focused on the literacy topic discussed in class that same week. After each teaching session, students created a weekly blog post which included their lesson plan, one student artifact, and a reflection on their teaching. Partners responded to each others' blog postings.

Data Sources

Assuming a teacher-researcher stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; MacLean & Mohr, 1999) this case study used a variety of data sources for studying the implementation of the redesigned course (Yin, 2009). The data sources are described below.

Concept Knowledge Assessment.   A pre- and post-assessment, measuring students' understanding of effective reading instruction, served as one of the major outcome measures. The exam questions were randomly selected from the teacher's edition of the adopted course text.

Student Surveys.   A pre-survey (see Appendix A) and a post-survey (see Appendix B) were administered at the beginning and end of the course to understand students' experiences and perceptions of using videos for field experience requirements. Additionally, a scale adapted from the work of Schrader et al. (2003) was integrated into the survey to determine if students' confidence changed related to their teaching abilities.

Blog Entries Exchanged between Instructors.   Weekly, the instructors wrote an individual blog entry and posted it on a private site that addressed what was done, what worked, what was learned, and where we wanted to go next. We shared and responded to each other's blog.

Blog Entries Exchanged between Students.   Weekly, students posted a public blog that was available to everyone in the class and responded to a partner's blog related to their virtual field experience and their teaching. Blogs were selected as a means for students to gain experience with an online format that might be used with their future students and to archive documents for future accessibility even after the class was finished (Zawilinski, 2009).

Student Interview.   At the end of the class, 12 of the 17 students agreed to participate in a small group interview. The interview questions pertained to students' overall learning experiences and perceptions of the course and to students' intent to apply what they learned (see Appendix C).

Student's Weekly Exit Slips, Final Self-Assessment, and Course Reflection.   At the end of each face-to-face class, students wrote an anonymous reaction/response to the class. Additionally, at the end of the course, students wrote a self-assessment and course reflection explaining their perceptions about the class and their own performance.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study consisted of three levels. First, findings from the pre- and post-assessment of student data were analyzed to locate student achievement gains. Second, pre- and post-findings from student surveys, including their self-reported confidence in teaching and preferences for the format of the course design, were compared from the onset of the course to the completion of the course. Finally, qualitative data from the student interviews, student exit slips, and student/teacher blogs were analyzed using categorical aggregation (Creswell, 2012) both during the course and at the end of the course.

Initial analysis included locating patterns across multiple sources that were refined through ongoing conversations and by continually returning to the data set for confirmation. This resulted in the development of the categories of skills, preferences, experiences, and dispositions that were explicitly linked to using videos for literacy instruction. As a result, three themes emerged that were then channeled into naturalistic generalizations: student and teacher perceptions of course design, student concept knowledge, and student confidence in teaching.

An effort was placed at all stages of analysis on triangulating findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by the researchers meeting regularly both online and face-to-face for peer-rating feedback. When discrepancies arose, we returned to the data set as a team to review and reach agreement. Finally, the 12 students who participated in the interviews were given a copy of the findings and asked to critically analyze the interpretations of the study as it related to their understandings of what occurred. Our intentions were to involve the "research participants in the construction and validation of knowledge" (Lather, 1986, p. 265).

Findings

According to the data, findings related to the following three areas: 1) student and instructor perceptions about course design, 2) student concept knowledge, and 3) student confidence in teaching.

Student and Instructor Perceptions about Course Design

Students reported their preferences for course design at the beginning of the course and after the course. These preferences are reflected in Figure 1. Interestingly, of the 12 reporting students, none chose the "traditional" format for the course design at the end of the course; nine of the 12 students preferred hybrid while three preferred an online design.

Both students and instructors had mixed experiences and perspectives about how the videos were used in the course. Their perspectives related to three areas: access, viewing, and authenticity. First, instructors were frustrated when they could not purchase videos because of copyright issues. They decided to have students purchase the resource package associated with their textbook that included videos; however, it cost $75 and several students were upset about this extra expense. Additionally, a few students had technical issues accessing the videos even after
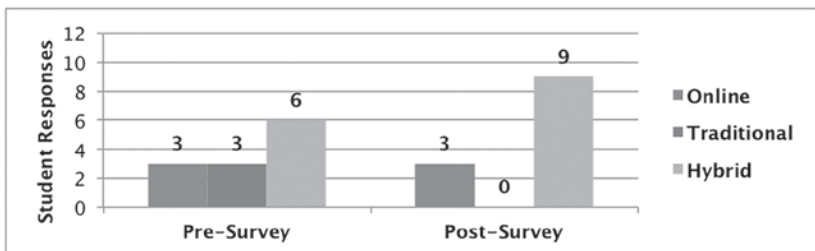
Figure 1. Student preferences of course design from the student pre- and post-survey results

purchasing and some indicated they could not tell the difference between the free videos and the purchased ones. Additionally, some students enrolled late in the class and were absent for medical reasons. Both issues caused concern regarding how and when these students would view the videos during the short 7-week format.

Next, once they viewed the videos, students reported mixed reactions concerning the length and topics of the videos. Some students did not like viewing several short videos, while others preferred short segments to avoid becoming "bored" or "distracted." At the midpoint of the course exit slips from students suggested they should be allowed to select some of the videos versus viewing only instructor-selected videos. As a result, for the remaining three weeks of the course, students were given the option to view one hour of videos selected by the instructors or to view 30 minutes of the instructor videos and 30 minutes of student-acquired videos each week. Students responded to this change by expressing appreciation to the instructors for listening to their suggestions and honoring their opinions.

Several students decided to select and view videos on their own and discovered numerous free teaching videos available online. Students expressed excitement about having these valuable tools at their fingertips and discussed plans to view them in the future. In fact, the archival and retrievable nature of the videos was one of the features noted in our post-course reflections as one student reflected, "This course was very informative! It offered students literacy resources and videos that we can use for our own classrooms." Thus, although the initial reactions to the teacher-selected videos were mixed, students seemed to prefer the opportunity to choose their own videos from free online sources and to compile videos that they could later use for their future classrooms.

Third, although students acknowledged the value of viewing best practices that were modeled in the videos, some expressed a desire to experience an actual K-4 setting where they could ask questions of the teacher, especially about classroom management, and learn additional context information. For example, one student noted in her post-course reflection that although she valued the video field experience for "saving time" and giving her a "valuable glimpse into balanced literacy classrooms," she wished that she could have been exposed to "different teaching perspectives from teachers at schools where I may eventually work." In other words, students questioned the authenticity of viewing videos versus being present in a live classroom. In addition, instructors found it challenging to develop assignments that would link the videos to problem-based learning, diversity, and specific literacy needs. In particular, instructors felt it was time consuming to develop teaching scenarios that were relevant and dependent upon viewing videos.

In sum, students noted issues related to using videos in the 7-week hybrid format; however, all students agreed that they would take another class that substituted videos for traditional field experiences. All students also confirmed they would recommend this course format to their peers and noted they would appreciate having other courses in their program offered in a 7-week hybrid format. Similarly, both instructors agreed that they valued this model, desired to tweak future courses according to the findings, and welcomed the opportunity to teach more courses that substituted video viewing for traditional field experiences.

Student Concept Knowledge

Findings related to student concept knowledge were compiled from the 17 students in the class and were focused around the improvement of concept knowledge related to their teacher certification exams. Student concept knowledge as measured in the pre- and post-assessment of early literacy knowledge is compiled in Figure 2. Of the 12 students who took both the pre- and post-assessment, a total of eight students increased their score and two remained the same from the onset of the course. Only two students displayed negative gains. The range of scores from the pre-test included 56%-88%, while the range of scores from the post-test included 60%-92%. Of the 12 students who displayed improvement, one student improved by three grade level categories, three students improved by two grade level categories, and three students improved by at least one grade level categories. Overall, however, from the pre- and post-assessment results, it was deemed inconclusive whether the videos contributed to students' concept knowledge.

While the scope of the study did not measure the correlation between students' concept knowledge and the use of video instruction, student perceptions of their growth in content knowledge were captured. When writing about
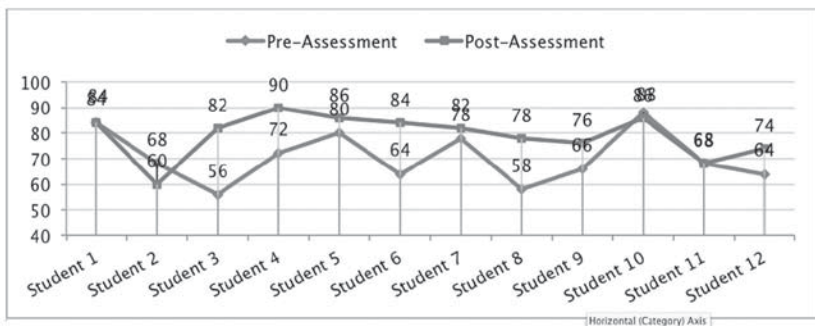
Figure 2. Comparison of student pre- and post-assessments of concept knowledge

their experiences with the videos in their post-course reflection, students directly linked specific knowledge gains to their video field experiences. One direct connection to student knowledge gains were their ability to identify the components of reading development and instruction. For example, one student said the videos helped her to "have a much greater understanding of stages of reading and writing development" and to "feel more aware of the components of literacy, and when and how they should be introduced to children." Another direct connection to student knowledge gains was the ability to analyze teacher practice of literacy instruction. For instance, one student compared her previous field experiences to the video field experience and noted the following:

> *As a student that has done all of the available aspects of the field experience needed for the program, this by far has to be the best, and most rewarding. I have been in a classroom, with a teacher, observing him or her teaching, and I never really liked the outcome of information on my part. I always left with unanswered questions, wondering what if something had happened. Some of the observations I have taken part in, sadly enough, were quite boring, and I believe I didn't really gain anything out of the situation. Having the opportunity to do part of my field experience watching videos instead of going to the classroom allows me to see how certain situations and strategies take place correctly in the classroom.*

Not only did the student note her concern for her "outcome of knowledge" in her traditional field observations, she further expressed her appreciation for being able to learn how to approach "certain situations and strategies" by watching the videos from the course. As teacher certification exams typically measure concept knowledge through both content sections such as early literacy development as well as sections designed to measure knowledge of principles of teaching and learning, the instructors found the videos to be helpful for students in each of these two domains.

Moreover, according to the data gathered from the students' blogs and scenario assignments, students gained knowledge about teaching literacy from the application of the videos. Students integrated new practices each week into their lesson plans, discussed their new knowledge with peers, and noted that they especially valued receiving feedback from their peers. Instructors also noted in their weekly blog exchanges that students were approaching lessons with increased skills that were discussed in class and online. For example, one student reflected in her blog that, "The assignments force you to engage in the readings and videos, so you come away feeling like you know the material." Another student noted how the videos helped her to acquire knowledge as she stated in her blog, "I like the videos

that you watch. It helps the visual learner understand the material and concepts being discussed." However, as noted by one instructor in her blog there were times that students had misconceptions or needed additional information about implementing the new literacy practices: "It appeared that most of the students do not have experience with administering an IRI [informal reading inventory] or running records. And I'm not sure how confident most are in completing this task this week."

In sum, findings varied regarding improvements in student knowledge in the area of teaching literacy. Although the pre- and post-assessment scores only indicated modest gains in students' concept knowledge, the data from students' weekly teaching, online discussions, written comments in exit slips, and course evaluations support the finding that students' knowledge base did expand.

Student Confidence in Teaching

Regarding student confidence in teaching, results addressed four categories represented on both the pre- and post-surveys (Schrader et al., 2003): 1) confidence in assessing literacy skills, 2) confidence in teaching literacy skills, 3) confidence in incorporating literacy lessons, and 4) confidence in implementing writing lessons. Additionally, students used five scale options when addressing each of the categories: 1) Not Confident At All, 2) Not Very Confident, 3) Neutral, 4) Somewhat Confident, and 5) Very Confident. Pre-survey results for confidence in teaching are reported in Figure 3, while post-survey results for confidence in teaching are reported in Figure 4.

First, when self-reporting about their confidence in assessing literacy skills, the majority of the 12 students who completed both the pre- and post-surveys survey initially selected "neutral" at the start of the course, but at the end of the course, students reported that they were "somewhat" confident. A total of 42% of respondents moved one Likert-scale option in their confidence level in assessing literacy with 33% moving up two Likert- scale options. Overall, all students
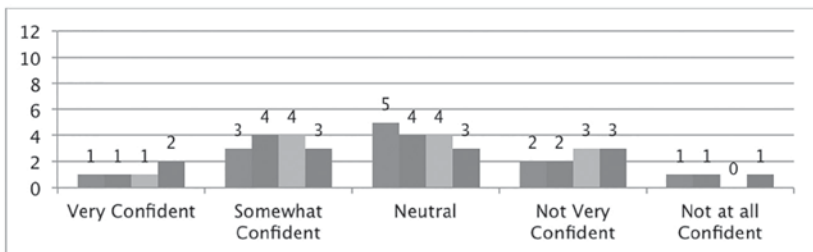
Figure 3. Student confidence of their literacy knowledge by category from pre-survey results
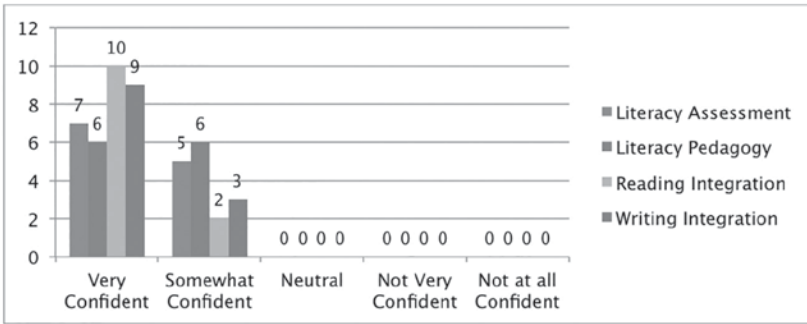
Figure 4. Student confidence of their literacy knowledge by category from the post-survey results

reported a gain in their confidence with assessing literacy skills except for two students who remained the same.

Second, when students reported their confidence in the area of literacy pedagogy, findings were initially mixed across the five scale options on the survey, representing the diversity of their previous teaching experiences. Regardless of their initial confidence going into the course, a total of 66% of the respondents reported an increase in their confidence of teaching literacy skills at the end of the course with half of those respondents moving from "neutral" to "very confident" in reporting their confidence. Overall, all students reported a gain in this category except for three students who remained the same.

For the third and fourth categories of confidence in reading and writing integration, students reported similarly as they did in the second category of confidence in literacy pedagogy. According to the data students viewed the teaching of literacy skills synonymously with incorporating literacy lessons and implementing writing lessons, which suggested students did not feel any more or less prepared in one component of literacy instruction than another.

In sum, these findings suggest mixed results with students' perceptions about their confidence with teaching literacy. Results from the confidence survey were not as strong as the students' comments in their group interview, weekly exit slips, online discussions, or final course evaluation.

Conclusions and Implications

College students today are not only becoming more tech-savvy but "overwhelmingly prefer and have experienced courses with at least some online components" (Dahlstrom & Bichsel, 2014, p.3). By attempting to bridge out-of-school learning

more closely to in-school learning, many universities are not only offering a growing number of online and hybrid courses, they are also requiring face-to-face courses which include multimedia and other forms of e-learning opportunities. For teacher educators, one option for meeting this university requirement is to integrate videos of real teachers and students in K-12 classrooms into field experience requirements (Leu & Kinzer, 2000). Video-based approaches have attracted significant interest as a powerful learning method, and there is clear evidence that pre-service teachers greatly benefit from video-based instruction (Hewitt, Pedretti, & Bencze, 2003; Knight, Pedersen, & Peters, 2004). According to our findings and consistent with the literature, these benefits include accessibility to videos at times that best fit students' busy schedules, opportunities for group viewings of the same scenarios allowing students to participate in related discussions with peers and teachers, opportunities to observe a variety of exemplary teaching practices, options to select and review particular areas of interest, and the capability to reflect in ways not possible during live observation (Star & Strickland, 2008; Yadav, 2008).

As with most innovations, there are associated challenges, and in the current study students and instructors reported mixed evidence about selecting and using appropriate videos. Not only were there additional costs related to obtaining and using videos, the impact on students' knowledge and confidence was not clear. Yet, students and instructors all agreed they would recommend video use for future classes.

We acknowledge that our research was limited to one course that was using virtual field experiences for the first time in a 7-week hybrid format. In addition to this being an exploratory study, we also note there was a low sample size with 12 of the 17 students agreeing to participate in the survey. Nonetheless, with the anticipation of a growing movement of more hybrid, online, and virtual experiences in future literacy education courses, we offer five aspects for teacher educators to thoughtfully consider when using or planning to use this format. These five aspects are displayed in Figure 5**.**

Teacher Educators Should Identify Which Courses Are Most Appropriate for Using Videos

Both students and instructors in this class gave a positive endorsement to this form of delivery and felt 7-weeks was adequate time to effectively link the videos to course assignments. Students also emphasized the importance of using videos in additional courses. This consistency of a similar video format in other literacy classes could add to students' confidence with how to be successful in a class and lead to overall satisfaction with their program. This consistent viewing and
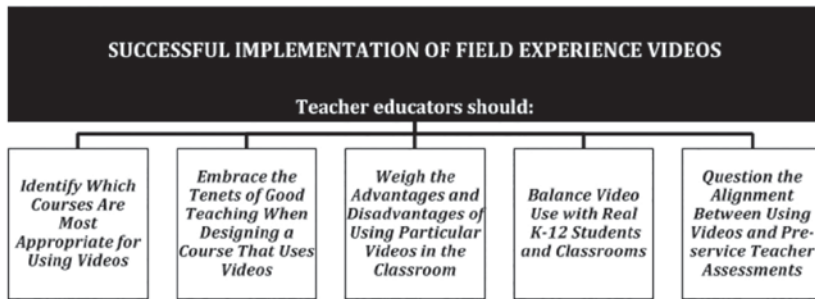
Figure 5. Five aspects to consider for successful implementation of field experience videos

critiquing is also necessary for transforming students from "novice" to "expert" (Collins et al., 1991). Furthermore, given the current goal of most universities to recruit and retain students, offering 7-week classes that use videos could be an added bonus for attracting more students.

Teacher Educators Should Embrace the Tenets of Good Teaching When Designing a Course That Uses Videos

While this recommendation may seem obvious, it is important to note that students' positive perceptions about viewing videos were primarily connected to tenets of good teaching. In this class, as in other studies, students valued engaging in partner and small group assignments, receiving timely feedback, having policies for late and missed worked, receiving their syllabus prior to the class starting, participating in problem-based learning assignments, using technology for learning, and having opportunities to reflect on their learning (Star & Strickland 2008; Yadav, 2008). In particular, when thinking about using videos in a class, instructors need to be mindful of how scaffolding and coaching fit into their teaching as a means to assist students with developing their literacy expertise (Collins et al., 1991).

Teacher Educators Should Weigh the Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Particular Videos in the Classroom

In this class, instructors found that selecting engaging and effective videos was connected to cost, access, and technology problems. Students had mixed opinions about the type and length of videos they preferred. Overall students liked the videos because of the flexibility and easy access they afforded. Students also appreciated the opportunity to select part of the course-required videos, which

encouraged them to reflect on their learning and align their personal needs with their viewing time. Embracing this reflective model of learning is a mindset that current literacy programs hope to create for their students (Schön, 1983) and in addition, having students select their own videos can help instructors with the ongoing need of finding current and appropriate videos. To ensure videos selected by students meet the criterion for quality, instructors could create a system for pre-approving videos prior to acceptance for course assignments. Overtime, instructors would create an extensive student-generated list to provide in their courses. Another bonus of students selecting videos, as they noted in this study, is the discovery of the rich and robust offerings of online videos that can support their future professional development.

Teacher Educators Should Balance Video Use with Real K-12 Students and Classrooms

In this class, MAT students also taught a K-4 child outside the classroom. Students' reflections noted positive outcomes from this experience including deeper understandings and new insights into their teaching (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). However, it was also found that students were concerned that they did not teach children in a K-12 setting. Students reported that in their future teaching they were afraid they would not know how to implement literacy lessons and deal with classroom management issues at the same time. This suggests the importance of providing video viewing and field experience opportunities in a thoughtful and meaningful way during teacher education programs, searching for the balance between videos and authentic K-12 settings.

Teacher Educators Should Question the Alignment Between Using Videos and Pre-service Teacher Assessments

When using videos in this literacy methods course, we found there were mismatches between students' performances on exams and their perceptions about their performance. This raises questions about the alignment between videos and tests. Although students showed modest gains in their test scores, their perceptions of their own knowledge development for teaching literacy were high. Were the students simply not "doing the reading," or did they have very little concept knowledge? Did the instructors choose good videos with concept knowledge aligned to their textbook and teacher certification exams? For this course, the instructors selected the test questions from the test bank offered by the textbook publishers. What does this mean about the types of questions reported on teacher certification exams? How do they align with student perceptions of what it means to be a good literacy educator? Will videos distract from the development of

students' concept knowledge? How does their concept knowledge align to the Praxis test questions required of pre-service teachers? Does more thought need to be placed into how concept knowledge aligns with teacher practice? These and other questions need to be addressed by future research.

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Appendix A
Course Pre-Survey
(Adapted from Schrader et al., 2003)

Please underline the response that best applies to you. Some questions will allow you to select more than one answer as directed in the question. Other questions will allow you to type your responses. After you have finished your survey, please save it before uploading it into the *Submit Course Pre-Survey* link located in Module One.

1. How many online courses have you previously taken?
   a. 5 or more
   b. 3-4
   c. 1-2
   d. None

2. Have you ever taken a hybrid course where you meet both traditionally and online?
   a. Yes
   b. No

3. Why are you taking this specific course? You may choose more than one answer.
   a. It is a requirement for my program of study.
   b. I am interested in the topic for my academic and professional growth.
   c. The course met my demands for scheduling.
   d. Other:

4. If you had the choice between taking this course in a traditional format or online, which would you choose?
   a. Completely Online
   b. Completely Traditional
   c. Both Traditional and Online (i.e. Hybrid)

5. How confident do you feel regarding assessing literacy skills of K-4 students?
   a. .Very confident
   b. .Somewhat confident
   c. .Neutral
   d. .Not very confident
   e. .Not confident at all

6. How confident do you feel regarding teaching literacy skills to K-4 students?
   a. Very confident
   b. Somewhat confident
   c. Neutral
   d. Not very confident
   e. Not confident at all

7. How confident do you feel regarding incorporating reading lessons into the K-4 classroom?
   a. Very confident
   b. Somewhat confident
   c. Neutral
   d. Not very confident
   e. Not confident at all

8. How confident do you feel implementing writing lessons into the K-4 classroom?
   a. Very confident
   b. Somewhat confident
   c. Neutral
   d. Not very confident
   e. Not confident at all

9. What is most and/or least appealing aspect to you about taking an online class to learn more about literacy development in K-4? Please type your response.

10. What is most and/or least appealing aspect to you about taking a hybrid course to learn more about literacy development in K-4? Please type your response.

11. What other questions, issues, or concerns do you have at this time regarding our course? Please type your response.

APPENDIX B
Course Post-Survey
(Adapted from Schrader et al., 2003)

Please underline the response that best applies to you. Some questions will allow you to select more than one answer as directed in the question. Other questions will allow you to type your responses. After you have finished your survey, please save it before uploading it into the *Submit Course Post-Survey* link located in Module Seven.

1. Why did you take this specific course? You may choose more than one answer.
   a. It is a requirement for my program of study.
   b. I am interested in the topic for my academic and professional growth.
   c. The course met my demands for scheduling.
   d. Other:

2. If you had the choice between taking this course in a traditional format or online, which would you choose?
   a. Completely Online
   b. Completely Traditional
   c. Both Traditional and Online (I.e. Hybrid)

3. How confident do you feel regarding assessing literacy skills of K-4 students?
   a. Very confident
   b. Somewhat confident
   c. Neutral
   d. Not very confident
   e. Not confident at all

4. How confident do you feel regarding teaching literacy skills to K-4 students?
   a. Very confident
   b. Somewhat confident
   c. Neutral

    d. Not very confident
    e. Not confident at all

5. How confident do you feel regarding incorporating reading lessons into the K-4 classroom?
    a. Very confident
    b. Somewhat confident
    c. Neutral
    d. Not very confident
    e. Not confident at all

6. How confident do you feel implementing writing lessons into the K-4 classroom?
    a. Very confident
    b. Somewhat confident
    c. Neutral
    d. Not very confident
    e. Not confident at all

7. What was the most and/or least appealing aspect to you about taking a hybrid course to learn more about literacy development in K-4? Please type your response.

8. What the most and/or least appealing aspect to you about this class being offered as a seven-week course?

9. Please rate the level of effectiveness of each of the following current best-practices for teaching and learning in this course.

Building a Community of Learners	1 2 3 4 5
Problem Based Learning/Authentic Learning	1 2 3 4 5
Opportunities to Reflect on Effective Literacy Practices	1 2 3 4 5
Timely Feedback from Instructors	1 2 3 4 5
Rich, Dynamic Media Integration	1 2 3 4 5
Balance of Whole Group/Small Group/Individual	1 2 3 4 5
Integration of Socio-Cultural Learning Theory	1 2 3 4 5

10. Please rate the overall effectiveness of the videos for your understanding of how to be an effective K-4 literacy teacher. Use the Likert scale provided with 1 being the least effective and 5 being the most effective.

Module One: Common Core Standards	1 2 3 4 5
Module Two: Assessment	1 2 3 4 5

Module Three: Phonemic Awareness and Spelling	1 2 3 4 5
Module Four: Fluency and Word Knowledge	1 2 3 4 5
Module Five: Comprehension	1 2 3 4 5
Module Six: Balanced Literacy Curriculum	1 2 3 4 5

11. How would you rate the online videos in their effectiveness as a substitution for field experience requirements? Use the Likert scale provided with 1 being the least effective and 5 being the most effective.

Module One: Common Core Standards	1 2 3 4 5
Module Two: Assessment	1 2 3 4 5
Module Three: Phonemic Awareness and Spelling	1 2 3 4 5
Module Four: Fluency and Word Knowledge	1 2 3 4 5
Module Five: Comprehension	1 2 3 4 5
Module Six: Balanced Literacy Curriculum	1 2 3 4 5

12. What were the advantages to the online videos regarding your learning of the material?

13. What were the disadvantages to the online videos regarding your learning of the material?

14. In your opinion, should we continue to substitute videos for field experience requirements in this class?
    a. Yes
    b. No

15. If we continue to use videos for field experiences, what should the instructors do differently?

16. Would you recommend that our program offer RDNG 7553 for seven-weeks and then offer RDNG 7554 directly after it in the same semester?
    a. Yes
    b. No

17. Please list any additional questions, issues, or concerns regarding the design of this course.

Appendix C
Interview Questions

This semester we have been talking to you about our redesign of this course, and you have taken both a pre and post survey regarding your perceptions of the decisions that we have made in the design of this course. We want to thank you for agreeing to speak to us regarding your perceptions of these decisions. This interview is not required for participation in the course, and you will not be penalized for any of your responses. Additionally, you may choose to not answer a question or stop the interview at any point, and your responses will be anonymous for any reports we disclose about our redesign of the course. Do you have any questions or comments before we begin?

1. Last week we talked about what you would say to a friend who was thinking about taking this same course next semester, and you wrote an exit slip about three things that you liked about the course and one thing that you wished about the course.
   a. What would you tell a friend who was thinking of taking this course next semester?
   b. Overall, what were some of the things that you liked about this course?
   c. Overall, what were some of the things that you wished about this course?

2. Now, let's talk about taking a hybrid course where you meet both face-to-face and in person.
   a. What previous hybrid courses have you taken?
   b. What was the most appealing aspect to you about taking a hybrid course to learn more about literacy development in K-4?
   c. What was the least appealing aspect to you about taking a hybrid course to learn more about literacy development in K-4?
   d. Would you recommend to a friend that he or she take a hybrid course?

3. Next, let's talk about the seven-week aspect of the course.
   a. What previous seven-week courses have you taken?
   b. What was the most appealing aspect to you about this class being offered as a seven-week course?

  c. What was the least appealing aspect to you about this class being offered as a seven-week course?

  d. Would you recommend to a friend that he or she take a hybrid course?

4. Let's talk about the online videos.

  a. What previous experiences have you had with viewing videos for other classes?

  b. In your opinion, what are the advantages of viewing online videos for your learning of the material?

  c. In your opinion, what are the disadvantages of viewing online videos for your learning of the material?

  d. Would having online videos in a course influence your decision as to whether or not you take it or whether or not you continue in the course?

5. Now let's talk about viewing online videos for field experience requirements.

  a. What previous field experience requirements have you participated in previous courses?

  b. What was the most appealing aspect to you about using videos as a field experience requirement?

  c. What was the least appealing aspect to you about using videos as a field experience requirement?

  d. If our department chair comes to you and asks whether or not she should support online videos versus a traditional field experience for other courses, what would you tell her?

6. Finally, let's talk about current best-practices for teaching and learning. How well do you think the course met the following categories for best-practices in teaching and learning:

  a. Building a Community of Learners (Why or why not)

  b. Problem Based Learning/Authentic Learning (Why or why not)

  c. Opportunities to Reflect on Effective Literacy Practices (Why or why not)

  d. Timely Feedback from Instructors (Why or why not)

  e. Rich, Dynamic Media Integration (Why or why not)

  f. Balance of Whole Group/Small Group/Individual (Why or why not)

  g. Integration of Socio-Cultural Learning Theory (Why or why not)

7. What additional questions, issues, or concerns do you have regarding the design of this course?

Professional Development: A Key to the Implementation of the Common Core State Standards

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Abstract

The researchers examined the reading teaching efficacy of 157 secondary content area teachers to determine the impact a semester-long professional development training had on secondary inservice teachers ability to integrate literacy into their classrooms. Results of the study revealed that these secondary teachers initially had an overall low self-efficacy toward the teaching of literacy, but the professional development training had a positive impact on how these teachers were able to integrate literacy into their content classrooms.

Since the inception of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), secondary teachers have been exploring innovative ways to integrate literacy into the content areas. While integration of literacy into the content areas is not unprecedented in the upper grades (Moore, Readance, & Rickleman, 1983; Barry, 1997), its mandate is new territory for many practitioners.

Common Core State Standards requires that in addition to the instruction students receive in their English Language Arts courses (ELA), "teachers in other areas must have a role in this development as well" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA Center] & Council of Chief State

School Officers [CCSSO] 2010, para. 7). Too often, while secondary teachers have extensive training in their subject area, they have little or no preparation in literacy instruction (Sturtevant, 2002). By the 1980s most states required some type of content area reading course for secondary school teachers (Farrell and Cirrincione, 1986). Current and dated research indicate that a required content area literacy course for undergraduate secondary preservice teachers helps those teacher gain awareness of the need for literacy at this level and prepare them to implement it in their classrooms (Hong-Nam & Szabo, 2014; Alger, 2009; Stieglitz 1983).

Sadly, with budget cuts, recessions, and other factors, such requirements have been relaxed in many states. One Midwestern state has eliminated all content literacy requirements for preservice secondary teachers, leaving them with no instruction at all in content area reading. Regrettably, this trend is not uncommon. As a result, many secondary teachers struggle to provide systematic literacy instruction in content area classrooms and extra support for struggling readers (Sturtevant, 2002). Yet, this is an integral facet of the CCSS. Whether or not teachers have preparation to teach reading, they are confronted daily with "new information about ways to teach reading, only to become discouraged by the increasing curricular demands across subject areas" (Corpus & Giddings, 2010, p. 4). Consequently, Allen (2004) notes, "meeting the challenges of content literacy can be an almost overwhelming task for students and teachers" (p. 2).

An additional characteristic that has gained a significant amount of attention among educators is teacher self-efficacy, which measures how they feel about their own ability to teach. Szabo and Mokhtari (2004) explain that efficacy beliefs of teachers toward teaching reading may range from low to strong. If a teacher has a low or weak efficacy belief toward teaching reading/literacy, this may lead to self-doubt, which may slow the development of the skills needed to perform the tasks outlined in the CCSS.

Purpose of Study

Amidst the "push" to teach something totally unfamiliar, many secondary teachers begin to doubt their efficacy to teach reading at all. Szabo and Mokhtari (2004) assert, "Educators also agree that high quality teachers possess certain characteristics that distinguish them from less effective peers" (p.1). These characteristics include, but are not limited to, knowledge of the field of expertise, skill in teaching, and dispositions towards learners. Self-efficacy is one such disposition.

Thus, bolstering secondary teachers' self-efficacy toward literacy instruction is critical both for the teachers and students. Therefore, this study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the self-efficacy of secondary inservice teachers toward the teaching of reading who have not had instruction in teaching reading/literacy?

2. How does semester-long professional development training in content area literacy for secondary inservice teachers impact their self-efficacy toward literacy instruction as the Common Core State Standards are implemented?

3. Is semester-long professional development training sufficient in helping secondary inservice teachers gain a better understanding of how and why to integrate literacy into their content area teaching?

Method

Participants

One hundred fifty-seven (157) secondary inservice teachers (9th-12th) participated in the study. . The participants came from a Midwestern state in primarily rural school districts and taught mathematics, science, social studies, and/or another content area. Participants consisted of an equal mixture of men and women. Administrators at respective school sites announced the opportunity for this professional development. Teachers volunteered and committed to participate in a semester long intensive literacy training. While teachers received no remuneration, they gleaned knowledge about teaching literacy, professional contacts, and in-service professional development points required by the state. No college credit was awarded.

On-going Professional Development Seminars

The researchers designed extensive professional development seminar sessions designed to help secondary teachers learn about content area literacy and integrate literacy into their content as the Common Core State Standards were implemented Unlike traditional professional development, which often is a one-day encounter with new material, this semester-long professional development

seminar sessions were based in the tenets of effective professional development (Darling Hammond, 2009):

1. be intensive, on-going, and connected to the subject taught,
2. focus on student learning,
3. align with district/site goals,
4. build working relationship among teachers in the building, and
5. include school based coaching.

Professional development seminars were created with a multi-faceted approach using the above framework as a guide. Although school administration strongly encouraged participation, all study participants volunteered. There were three daylong seminars (spread throughout the semester), online activities, and job embedded coaching. For the three daylong seminars, the districts provided release time and substitute teachers for the secondary inservice teachers. The seminars began with collaborative content area group planning that became the basis for the development of grade and subject-specific tools, such as instructional calendars, sample unit plans, and model lessons to help support teachers with literacy in the classroom. Throughout the process, teachers were offered hands-on professional development activities to engage with the new CCSS standards (specifically for integrating literacy into the content areas), discussed implications for teaching, learning, and integrating new tools into their classrooms. The collaboration among teachers of similar subjects at different schools was designed to help foster a professional learning community extending across the various school systems.

The job-embedded professional development support was designed to encourage best-practice sharing and extension whenever possible. A "coach" visited each participating inservice teacher at least twice during the semester to help with the implementation of the new standards calling for the integration of literacy. The coach was an instructional specialist employed by the respective district who had specialized training in literacy in the content area. The coach usually observed the teacher implementing the literacy strategies and then followed up with constructive comments. This job-embedded coaching continued for one additional semester after the initial semester of training.

The last component of the professional development seminars included online activities from a commercial vendor, to support their learning. For example, on-demand videos made virtually any subject in literacy available to the participants. During these sessions, content area teachers developed and practiced

strategies for implementation in their classrooms, planned for the CCSS instructional changes in their lessons and activities, and bolstered their knowledge of literacy development in secondary students.

Instrument

All participants took Szabo and Mokhtari's (2004) Reading Teaching Efficacy Instrument Assessment (RTEI) before the start of the project. The RTEI was re-administered to all participants at the conclusion of the semester long professional development. This instrument measures "self-efficacy, which examines teacher candidates' feelings about their ability to teach reading" (Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004, p. 1). Albert Bandura (1986), originator of the construct of efficacy, claims that efficacy beliefs indeed impact behavior (such as teaching). Teachers who have a low self-efficacy may in turn doubt their ability and not be able to perform the expected tasks. Conversely, those having a higher self-efficacy may be more likely to accomplish that which they set out to achieve (Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004). The survey consists of 16 statements. The participant responds to each statement on a Likert scale. After completion, the results showed the teacher efficacy toward teaching reading as low, average, or high. Szabo and Mokhtari (2004) report acceptable reliability and validity for this instrument to measure teachers' self-efficacy toward teaching literacy. Similarly, coaches recommended videos to assist the practitioners with their individual needs.

Data Collection and Analysis

Descriptive statistics were examined to explore trends in both the pre/ posttest data. The chart below reveals the findings:

TABLE I
Descriptive Statistics

	Pretest	Posttest
N	157	157
Mean	56.42	66.36
Median	56	67
Mode	55	69
Range	44	32
Standard Deviation	8.87	7.21
Minimum	30	47
Maximum	74	79

The mean of the pretest was 56.42. For scoring purposes on the RTEI, 16-55 indicates low self-efficacy, 56-68 signals average self-efficacy, while 69-80 shows high self-efficacy. Certainly an average of 56 is very near the bottom of the average. The mode is 55, which actually is in the low range for self-efficacy. The range also is quite large in the pretest at 44. Consistent with the literature, these descriptors seem to indicate that many secondary teachers may lack high self-efficacy toward teaching reading. The most frequently occurring score in fact was in the low self-efficacy range. The large range seemed to indicate knowledge at both ends of the continuum, which could lead to inequity in instruction. As CCSS are introduced and secondary teachers are mandated to teach literacy within their assigned content area, this indeed is a cause for concern.

The posttest had quite different results. The posttest mean was 66.36, a full 10 points higher than the pretest mean. Both the median and mode were 10 or more points higher and the range considerably lessened. The mean, while still in the average category, is much higher – indicative of a greatly enhanced self-efficacy toward teaching reading in the content areas. Similarly, the range was considerably lessened, showing that not nearly as much difference in the efficacy existed.

The pre and posttest scores were also examined using a correlated *t*-test. This statistical procedure is designed to "test for mean differences between two sets of data that have been collected on one group of subjects" (Johnson, 1989, p. 311). There was a statistically significant difference between the scores for the pretest (Mean = 56.42, Standard Deviation = 8.87) and the posttest (Mean = 66.36, Standard Deviation = 7.21), conditions; $t = 11.5038$, $p = .0001$. By conventional criteria (Johnson, 1989), this difference is considered to be extremely statistically significant.

Discussion

Timothy Shanahan suggested that "advanced literacy instruction embedded within content-area classes such as math, science, and social studies – should be a focus of middle and secondary school settings" (2008, pg. 1). This is consistent with the changes embedded in the CCSS. Thus the initial results of this study that showed the average secondary content area teacher scoring in the "low" category of reading teaching efficacy (were quite alarming. This is especially problematic as new standards require the inclusion of literacy in all content lessons, although most have never had a course in how to integrate reading or literacy into their content.

After the semester-long professional development training, the average secondary content area teacher scored in the "average category." Such a positive shift indicates an enhanced self-efficacy toward integrating the teaching of reading into ther content area subject matter. Teachers perceived themselves as better equipped to include and teach literacy than prior to the semester-long professional development training. The differences between the mean scores on the pre/posttests were so different that it was significant at the .0001 level.

The results also demonstrate practical significance in the design and duration of professional development. The RTEI scores increased to a much higher level after only a semester of professional development training. This speaks to the power of sustained professional development, rather than a one-time exposure to content. Sustained professional development certainly appears to be a useful tool to enhance the reading teaching efficacy of these secondary educators. As a majority of states and the District of Columbia implemented the CCSS and the mandated integration of literacy across the secondary content areas (Allyn, 2013; NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010), secondary content-area practitioners all across the nation will undoubtedly experience feelings of doubt and low self-efficacy toward the teaching of literacy. The results of this study offer hope that well-designed and sustained professional development may help increase teachers' self-efficacy toward teaching literacy. Goddard, Hoy and Hoy (2000) assert that enhanced teachers' beliefs about their practice augments their capability to positively impact student achievement. As this occurs, children across the United States will be the beneficiaries as they learn not only content, but discover the joy of becoming a proficient reader, writer, speaker, and listener.

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Bridging Cultures through Literacy: Using Multicultural Literature and Discussion to Promote Culturally Responsive Teaching

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Abstract

Feistritzer (2011) stated that 84% of the teaching population in the U. S. is white, monolingual women who lack the multicultural knowledge and experiences needed to teach our increasingly diverse students. The authors aim to support teachers in the development of culturally responsive instruction, regardless of their cultural background, by describing culturally sensitive approaches to their instruction. They also provide several examples of multicultural and international literature and discuss ways that it can be used to help students develop cultural competence.

Through globalization and migration, our society has become much more multicultural. People meet new faces in study, work, and business; people communicate with people from other cultures face-to-face or virtually in their native language or their learned languages; people have more access today to printed or virtual materials from other cultures. Literacy teachers who work with both English speakers and English language learners (ELLs) must develop an

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awareness of multiple cultures and knowledge of the cultures of "me" and "the other," so their students can be taught to read between the lines and become more culturally competent. However, for teachers in today's classrooms, this can be problematic, as 84% of the teaching population in the U. S. is white, monolingual women who have limited multicultural experiences (Feistritzer, 2011). They lack the multicultural knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to teach our increasingly diverse students (Turner, 2007). While "teachers who share their students' cultural backgrounds" may make a connection with their students quicker than other teachers, most teachers can learn to develop culturally responsive instruction (Au, 2009, p. 180).

The purpose of this paper is to share instructional approaches and children's literature that literacy teachers in diverse classrooms might use to make their instruction more culturally responsive by supporting children of minorities and by engaging all their students in multicultural dialogues to promote cultural responsiveness. The objectives of this paper are to describe instructional approaches that literacy teachers might implement to make their instruction more culturally responsive and to share ideas that teachers might use to support all their students with multicultural literature in a global classroom. In addition, several examples of multicultural and international literature are provided and ways that literature can be used to support students in developing "a set of reading skills that allows them to bring multiple cultural and critical perspectives" to their reading are discussed (Morrell & Morrell, 2012, p.10).

Culturally Responsive Instruction

According to Gay (2010), culturally responsive instruction is defined as "using cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p.31). When the classroom teacher's identity does not mirror his or her students' identities, this can be challenging to the teacher (Polleck & Shabdin, 2013); therefore, it is important that teachers really commit themselves to knowing their students (Hamm, 2014). Teachers learn about other cultures from their students' own knowledge of their cultures and families or "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Teachers who engage in culturally responsive instruction use "culturally appropriate texts, [engage] their students voices, and incorporate their students' funds of knowledge" in their teaching (Toppel, 2015, p. 553).

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is a much-needed skill for inservice and preservice teachers in an increasingly global teaching context. Moule (2008) asked four colleagues and 30 preservice teachers the question, "What are the major challenges faced by teacher education in an increasing global society?" Every interview that the author conducted had the key word– cultural competence and included a strong emphasis on the need for culturally competent teachers. Culturally competent teachers can successfully teach students who come from cultures other than their own (Moule, 2008), or alternatively, can develop culturally responsive instruction (Au, 2009).

To develop cultural competence, teachers must develop their awareness and knowledge of other cultures. They must try to understand the strengths and challenges of their students and maintain a classroom environment that promotes equity among all cultures (Banks & Banks, 1995) as a safe dialogic space, where minority voices are both extremely valuable and possibly marginalized (DePalma, 2008). In such a classroom, "diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups [are able to] attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within…democratic society" (Banks & Banks, 1995, p.152).

Preservice teachers can develop their own cultural responsiveness and competence through their multicultural education courses. One approach is textual and verbal dialogues between instructors and students along the journey of multicultural education (Millman, 2010). Via journals and discussions in the both authors' classes, students had chances to write and reflect on multicultural issues and to show their understandings toward multiculturalism and diversity. Insights into student thinking and understanding provided the opportunity to reach the goal of developing instruction with cultural responsiveness (Millman, 2010). Similarly, 22 foreign language teacher education candidates (representing six native languages other than English) who participated in a qualitative study stated that in-class dialogue and other hands-on projects, such as critical analyses and thematic instruction, promoted cultural understanding (Fox & Diaz-Greenberg, 2006). Both preservice and inservice teachers can utilize these strategies that highlight the vital role of dialogues in developing their own and their students' cultural competence.

Dialogue to Promote Cultural Competence

The development of cultural competence starts with intercultural or cross-cultural dialogues, which can be simply about daily life (Santos, Araújo, & Simões, 2014). Teachers might begin a dialogue with students asking them to

identify the associations they make with certain visuals or visualized tangible terms and to help them understand that these associations are based on their experiences and their own culture. The following are examples of culturally representative activities that may spark such discussions.

Color in Different Cultures.   Color is an easily accessible visual with the potential to uncover cultural differences. For example, the color red means warmth in general, but represents passion in some Latin countries, triumph in the Cherokee culture, communism in Russia, purity in India, and mourning in South Africa (Kiefer, 2014). In the same vein, the color blue might represent depression or sadness in the western hemisphere, but blue signifies heaven or spirituality in Iran. In many eastern cultures, the color white is used for funerals, but white denotes joy and purity for many brides in the western world. Another color, green often represents new birth and spring in the west, while in China wearing green hats indicate that a man's wife is cheating on him (Kiefer, 2014).

To help students understand the cultural differences of color, a teacher might ask, "What color represents nobility and royalty?" A European student may answer "purple", but a Chinese child may say "gold." Or the teacher may ask, "What does the color red mean to you?" An Asian student may say, "Prosperity, fortune, and happiness" while a western child might say, "power or anger." Discussions such as these can promote cultural understanding.

Signs in Different Cultures.   There are also some culturally associated signs. A light bulb, for instance, may be seen as simply a type of illumination in many cultures, but it represents the moment when an idea becomes clear or the moment when comprehension is suddenly realized; this is sometimes called an "Ah ha!" moment in western culture. In each culture, certain symbols may have special meanings (Norton, 2013). For Chinese children, wild geese may represent the spirit of freedom while cranes may symbolize longevity and health (Norton, 2013). Bats have opposite connotations in western and eastern cultures. They are associated with darkness and evilness as well as Halloween in western culture, but bats are related to fortune and prosperity in Chinese culture. It is important for teachers to develop their knowledge of these symbols and to use it to stimulate class discussions. Teachers might post a variety of symbols from different cultures and ask all their students to share their interpretations of each symbol. Through activities like these, children will be exposed to other ideas and perspectives.

High-Context and Low-Context Concepts

Another way that teachers might expand their students' cultural awareness is to discuss concepts that both cultures share. For example, a teacher might ask his or her students what the word "breakfast" makes them think of; western children may say "cereal, milk and bread" while Asian children might say "porridge and steamed buns." Thus, the same word "breakfast" leads to different associations or connotations for students in different cultures. Questions like these stimulate rich, dialogic discussions that help children see how others might view the world.

A high-context concept in one culture may be a low-context concept in another culture and vice versa. For instance, the Christmas holiday is a high-context festival in most western countries but not in the eastern. Thus, the children in the east may not connect the holiday, Christmas, to themselves, even when they see evergreen trees, stockings, gifts, and Santa Claus in their readings. Similarly, the children in western countries may not understand eastern festivals symbols for the Spring Festival in China, such as red pockets, red lanterns, and dumplings which is a high-context theme for most Chinese children. Low-context and high-context may also refer to economic and political differences, not just geographic or cultural. Students in poverty do not have the same life experiences as students in wealth. To be specific, students in poor families in Miami, for instance, are less likely to have the experience of feeling snow, but middle income or affluent students who have traveled to snowy areas may . Thus, an illustration of snow may evoke more thoughts and dialogues in more resourced students than in poor students living in tropical areas.

In the low-context culture, there may be a corresponding equivalence, with a different name or origin. In this case, teachers should interpret the low-context concept, using their local culture as an entry to reduce the distance of the concept for the target students. Using Christmas and the Spring Festival as an example, teachers may bridge the gap by showing the similarities of both festivals (i.e., being annually celebrated, the importance, family gathering, the feast, and typical colors of the decorations), or in the example of breakfast, teachers may share some pictures to show a typical breakfast in different cultures thus changing the cultural context to connect the text to the targeted students, so as to help students "see" themselves in their classrooms. In this sense, context is not an unchangeable component; on the contrary, literacy teachers can connect the text-reader relationship closely by making a low-context into a high-context, targeted to some students from a specific culture or a group.

Context along with students' previous knowledge, other than cultural differences, should also be considered when selecting books for teaching. For example, it might not be an appropriate starting point to choose a story about vacation travel for students in poor urban schools. Also, teachers need to understand which topics are appropriate to mention or read about in different cultures and which are not. For instance, they need to understand how to avoid mentioning taboos for children in certain cultures, or alternatively, how to mention them respectfully in a story, such as death in Chinese traditional culture (Leung, et al., 2015). Context is also important when considering cultural opposition. For example, in eastern culture dragons are considered as positive, just, holy, and prosperous totems, rather than evil living beings as in western storybooks. These understandings are difficult to achieve if the instruction, visuals, and reading materials are kept in low-context and not mediated by the teacher into high-context.

Culturally Authentic Literature

The use of children's literature is another way to foster cultural competence. However, to represent diverse children and families, it is critical that teachers introduce books that portray each culture accurately (Morgan, 2009). This allows children from less represented cultures to develop a sense of belonging and pride. It also promotes cross-cultural understanding among all students (Morgan, 2009). Culturally accurate or authentic children's books show characters from diverse cultures in real-life, modern situations. The characters are seen in positions of power, facing their own challenges and solving their own problems.

Two examples of culturally authentic books that teachers might use are *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi (2001) and *Nadia's Hands* by Karen English (2009). In *The Name Jar,* a young Korean child feels uncomfortable sharing her name with her classmates and asks them to create a "name jar" with many American names for her to choose from. She promises to select a name and share it with them the following week; however, some of her curious friends soon learn her real name and the name jar disappears as she begins to use her real name.

In the book, *Nadia's Hands*, a young girl from Pakistan worries about what her American classmates will think when she comes to school with her hands decorated with henna for her aunt's wedding. The children in both of these texts feel uncomfortable sharing aspects of their culture that will make them different from their mainstream classmates, but in both stories, the children learn to be proud of their differences. When teachers share stories like these, they begin a dialogue that allows their students from less represented backgrounds to share their culture while helping their mainstream students develop a diverse worldview.

Multiperspectival approach

One strategy that teachers might use with culturally authentic literature is a "Multiperspectival approach" (Morrell & Morrell, 2012). With this approach, students are taught to read a text, first from their own perspective, and then, to think about the text from the viewpoints of others (Morrell & Morrell, 2012). By exposing students to texts like these, students learn empathy for others' experiences and begin to develop a broader worldview. Further, the students acquire the ability to discuss issues of oppression and marginalization. They also learn to identify when a text promotes assimilation or includes erroneous information about a culture.

One book that might be used with this approach is *Suki's Kimono* by Chieri Uegaki (2013). In this book, the main character, Suki, is selecting what she will wear on the first day of school. She decides to wear the blue cotton kimono that her grandmother has sent her from Japan. At first, her older sisters and even her classmates laugh at her choice of a back to school outfit, but as the children get to know Suki, they end up admiring Suki and her unique style. This story showcases a child who is proud of her culture and teaches students a bit about cultural differences. It also offers teachers an opportunity to discuss alternate points of view.

In addition to offering culturally authentic literature viewed multiperspectivally, teachers should also offer a variety of both high and low-context reading materials to develop the recognition that universal truths and valuable subject matter are offered by all cultures (Au, 2009). One book that illustrates this concept is *The Ugly Vegetables* by Grace Lin (2001). In this book, a young Chinese girl is ashamed of her mother's garden because she grows "ugly" Chinese vegetables while all their western neighbors' gardens are full of beautiful flowers. This little girl wants her family to be like all the other families in her neighborhood. When using this book, teachers might ask their students to think about the story from the little girl's perspective and then to think about it from her mother's and her neighbors' perspectives. Teachers will also need to provide some context for the Chinese vegetables discussed in the story. Cultural differences and how it feels to be viewed as different from others might also be discussed. This type of literature and discussion fosters tolerance and understanding for each other's differences.

International Literature

In addition to using multicultural literature, teachers might also include international literature. International literature is defined as books that originated outside the U.S. and were translated into English or books with settings or information from outside the U.S. but were written by North American authors (Temple, Martinez, & Yokota, 2015). When teachers use international literature,

they open children's eyes to what is happening in the world and expand their world knowledge. Further, international literature may portray a culture more accurately than multicultural literature written in the United States.

Although international literature is a great resource for teachers, it is sometimes difficult to find in U. S. bookstores and libraries. Many publishers reject international books due to the differences in vocabulary and the types of illustrations that might be included in some books (Temple, et al., 2015). For example, in terms of vocabulary, an author using British English might use the word, "lift" instead of "elevator" or "lorrie" in place of "truck." International children's picture books might also include illustrations that U. S. publishers deem inappropriate, such as a bathing scene or a mother discreetly breastfeeding her child.

One international book that has been translated into English and published in the U. S. is *Grandpa's Town* by Takaaki Nomura (1995). In this book, a young Japanese boy and his grandfather spend the day together in town, and while they are there, they take a trip to a public bathhouse. While some of the illustrations do depict scenes in the bathhouse, they are discreet and, as with most high-quality picture books, those illustrations extend the meaning of the story. This book provides an opportunity for U. S. teachers and children to learn more about the Japanese culture, which in this case, includes public bathhouses.

A great resource for teachers, who are interested in finding other examples of high-quality international literature, is the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY). IBBY is a nonprofit organization that represents an international group of people who are dedicated to bringing the best books to children around the world. IBBY hosts a number of events and provides several great resources to teachers and families on their website. Every other year, they present the Hans Christian Anderson Award, the only international book award, to a children's book author and illustrator for their work in the field of literacy. More information may be found on their website at http://www.ibby.org.

Conclusion

American classrooms today are more culturally diverse than ever before. With the advances in technology and travel, the world has become a "global village" (Suh & Samuel, 2011, p. 1). Thus, such globalization beyond the U.S. boundary requires young students of both the majority and minority cultures in the U.S. to develop the cultural competence they will need in the future, so that they are more prepared to be "global citizens;" "sensitive to other cultures," (Suh & Samuel, 2011, p. 3) and capable of working interdependently with others (Au, 2009).

As classrooms become increasingly diverse, teachers must learn how to meet the needs of their culturally different students to keep their diverse cultural heritage and to develop students' cultural competence toward their own and others' cultures. Teachers can effectively support all their students' development of multicultural perspectives through the use of multicultural dialogues and culturally authentic literature along with a multiperspectival approach (Au, 2009; Harmon, 2012; Suh & Samuel, 2011).

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