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## Increasing vocabulary and oral language skills of pre-K English language learners through shared storybook reading and take-home literacy bags

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## Increasing vocabulary and oral language skills of pre-K English language learners through shared storybook reading and take-home literacy bags

### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of Shared Storybook Readings and Take Home Literacy Bags utilizing Dialogic Questioning Techniques on the oral language skills and vocabulary knowledge of preschool-aged English Language Learners.

Eleven preschool students identified as English Language Learners in a suburban school district took part in the six-week intervention. Each week students were exposed to three read-aloud experiences utilizing Dialogic Reading Techniques and Questioning and a Take Home Literacy Bag for further reading experiences with their families. Student growth was assessed weekly using three tools: Teaching Strategies GOLD observations, a Teacher-Created Vocabulary Assessment, and the Individual Growth and Development Indicators Screening Tool.

Results of the study support prior research by showing growth in participants' oral language skills and vocabulary knowledge. On the basis of this research it can be concluded that preschool students who are ELL benefit from Dialogic Reading Techniques and Questioning as a strategy to increase English vocabulary knowledge and oral language skills.

Increasing Vocabulary and Oral Language Skills of Pre-K English Language Learners through  
Shared Storybook Reading and Take Home Literacy Bags

A Graduate Research Paper  
Submitted to the  
Division of Early Childhood Education  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements of the Degree  
Master of Arts in Education  
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By

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Titled: Increasing Vocabulary and Oral Language Skills of Pre-K English Language Learners through Shared Storybook Reading and Take Home Literacy Bags

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of Shared Storybook Readings and Take Home Literacy Bags utilizing Dialogic Questioning Techniques on the oral language skills and vocabulary knowledge of preschool-aged English Language Learners. The final paper was presented as a master's research paper at the University of Northern Iowa.

Eleven preschool students identified as English Language Learners in a suburban school district took part in the six-week intervention. Each week students were exposed to three read-aloud experiences utilizing Dialogic Reading Techniques and Questioning and a Take Home Literacy Bag for further reading experiences with their families. Student growth was assessed weekly using three tools: Teaching Strategies GOLD observations, a Teacher-Created Vocabulary Assessment, and the Individual Growth and Development Indicators Screening Tool.

Results of the study support prior research by showing growth in participants' oral language skills and vocabulary knowledge. On the basis of this research it can be concluded that preschool students who are ELL benefit from Dialogic Reading Techniques and Questioning as a strategy to increase English vocabulary knowledge and oral language skills.

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## INTRODUCTION

The National Council of Teachers of English (2008) defines an English Language Learner (ELL) as an active learner of the English language who may benefit from various types of language support programs. The number of English Language Learners in the United States is continuing to grow. The number of students who are ELL in the state of Iowa has almost quintupled in the past 20 years (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2015). While the data on students who are ELL in the state of Iowa is clear, what is not clear is the number of those students being served in Iowa's preschool programs. The state currently does not gather that demographic data for preschool children. While this confounds researching preschool students who are ELL within our state in a broad sense, I can quantify demographic data over the past 8 years within my own classroom. In 2007 I had zero students who were ELL. In the 2015-2016 school year I have 13 students who are ELL, who speak 7 distinct non-English languages. As this population continues to grow, the need for effective strategies to service these students increases.

### **Statement of Problem**

Research tells us that vocabulary knowledge and oral language skills at school entry are two important indicators of later reading and writing abilities. A majority of students who are ELL enter kindergarten knowing fewer English vocabulary words and exhibit less proficiency in English oral language skills than native English speaking peers. Research also shows the importance of early interventions to close the gap in vocabulary knowledge between at risk populations like English Language Learners and higher socio-economic students. "English learners have traditionally been at risk for reading difficult and their at-risk status is partially determined by their literacy competencies prior to kindergarten entry" (Roberts & Neal, 2004, p. 305). Servicing higher risk populations early can help to close the gap in knowledge, increasing their later success and decreasing the need for more intense intervention in later grades.

Knowing the importance of an early intervention to close the gap between students who are ELL and native English speakers, the question becomes how best do we serve these students?

Studies have shown the use of targeted vocabulary instruction through the reading of children's storybooks to be a way to increase student English vocabulary knowledge and oral language skills in English Language Learners. In 2009, Collins found that children learned words through explicit explanations provided during multiple read-alouds of a book. Using Dialogic Reading strategies, we can increase a student's vocabulary acquisition and oral language skills through the use of intentional vocabulary instruction and questioning.

Parental involvement is another important factor to consider when working with students who are ELL. It is important to honor and support the student's first language as development of the second language occurs. Involving parents in this process will help to ensure the family's trust and support. Brannon and Dauksas (2012) found that students whose parents used Dialogic Reading questioning with their students at home had a greater increase in English language skills and vocabulary. In 2014, O'Brien, et al. found that Family Literacy Programs that incorporated shared reading and language activities had a positive effect on student vocabulary knowledge.



### **Research Questions and Definitions**

The purpose of this research study was to determine how well the use of Shared Storybook Reading and dialogic reading techniques in the classroom in conjunction with Take Home Literacy Bags increased English vocabulary knowledge and English oral language skills in my students. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. Will English Language Learners' targeted and overall vocabulary increase?
2. Will English Language Learners' oral language abilities increase?

This project was a combination of two interventions aimed at increasing the English vocabulary knowledge and English oral language skills of preschool children in a suburban Iowa city. The first intervention was a series of Shared Storybook Readings in the classroom using Dialogic questioning techniques and targeted vocabulary instruction. The second intervention, done in conjunction with the first, was Take Home Literacy Bags. Each Friday participants took home a literacy bag containing the storybook that was read throughout the week with a set of questions parents could use to expand student knowledge and skill through shared reading experiences. Additionally each storybook bag contained a CD with an audio recording of the storybook being read.

Assessment data were collected using an observational assessment (TS GOLD) that is based primarily on anecdotal records, a teacher-created vocabulary assessment (TCVA), and an Early Literacy screener. The Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment System uses observational data to determine a student's developmental level on multiple objectives and is currently implemented in all State Voluntary Pre-K classrooms. Using TS GOLD to determine growth in oral language and vocabulary through teacher observational anecdotes has been found to be highly reliable by The Center for Educational Measurement and Evaluation (2014).

The TCVA consisted of picture cards used to assess targeted vocabulary words. Picture cards were created based upon the selected vocabulary words within the storybooks, using realistic photos of actual objects.

Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs) is an Early Literacy Screener created at the Center for Response to Intervention in Early Childhood at the University of Minnesota. Data from the Picture Naming subtest of IGDIs served as an objective assessment of general vocabulary knowledge. In 2004, research done by Missall and McConnell at the Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota found the Picture Naming portion of the IGDIs assessment to be highly reliable and valid. They found it to be highly correlated to other standardized assessments of language development such as the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – Third Edition and the Preschool Language Scale - 3.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the research tells us that vocabulary at Kindergarten entry is an important factor in future reading and school success (Kiefer, 2012). Research has also shown vocabulary instruction and storybook reading to have substantial effect on increasing vocabulary and language complexity (Sylvester, Kragler, & Liontas, 2014). Research in the use of Dialogic Reading techniques with Pre-K students who are ELL has shown it has positive effects on development of vocabulary oral language skills. (Dockrell, et al., 2010; Roberts & Neal, 2004) This study has important implications because English Language Learners are at an academic disadvantage when they enter an English-only school setting. These students are pulling triple duty by learning to produce oral language, increasing their receptive English language skills, and building their English vocabulary all at the same time.

Research on English Language Learners indicates they are at a higher risk of poor academic performance and reading difficulties. Data shows us that the number of students entering preschool with no English language exposure is on the rise, making ELL instruction even more important in Early Childhood programs. Espinosa (2008) noted in *Challenging Common*

*Myths About Young English Language Learners*, “Head Start has documented more than 140 different languages among their families enrolled” (p. 6). Finding strategies to increase their vocabulary knowledge and develop their oral language skills prior to Kindergarten entry is imperative.

There is a large body of research investigating the best strategies for servicing the students. Current research shows there is a strong correlation between early English oral language and later levels of English reading abilities (Kiefer, 2012). Vocabulary knowledge at school onset is one indicator of a student’s later reading ability. Students who are ELL begin school with a smaller English vocabulary and thus have a higher tendency to need interventions to close the gap. Many studies have shown the use of targeted vocabulary instruction through the use of children’s storybooks to be a way to close that gap. The results of one study done by Kelley, Goldstein, Spencer, and Sherman in 2015 showed the use of a targeted storybook vocabulary intervention was effective at increasing vocabulary in at-risk preschool children.

Multiple studies have shown that parental involvement in children’s learning helps to increase student academic success. Brannon and Dauksas (2012) found that Spanish-speaking students whose parents used dialogic reading questioning with their students at home had a greater increase in English language skills and vocabulary. Involving parents through the use of Take Home Literacy Bags supports the student’s home language by encouraging conversation at home and supporting the home language while encouraging English acquisition. Huang (2013) and Caesar and Nelson (2014) both found that the feasibility of using parental involvement to increase English Language Learners’ vocabulary and oral language skills is high. The use of Take Home Literacy Bags in the Pre-K setting is supported by their research and had positive parental feedback.

Research also shows that bilingual classrooms and support of a child’s first language helps to maintain the first language and scaffolds their prior knowledge into their new language (Espinosa & Foundation for Child Development, 2008; Goldberg, Hicks, & Lit, 2013; Ortiz & Franquiz, 2012). While this is not feasible within this study or the context of my classroom,

involving parents through the use of Take Home Literacy Bags supports the student's home language by encouraging conversation at home. Parent involvement in a child's education and shared reading experiences has been shown to aid the development of a child's oral language skills in both home language and English (Brannon & Dauksas, 2012; Caesar & Nelson, 2014; Huang, 2013). The inclusion of multi-modal readings was shown by Kelley, Goldstein, Spencer, and Sherman (2015) to increase a student's vocabulary and comprehension. Research has shown that while live communication is best at building oral language skills, the use of technology in this way can help build the Third Space where connections are made (Ilter, 2015; Ortiz & Franquiz, 2012; Thajakan & Sucaromana, 2014).

## METHODOLOGY

This study was undertaken to understand to what degree a combination of two interventions, Shared Storybook Reading and Take Home Literacy Bags, increased the vocabulary knowledge and oral language skills of Pre-K students who are ELL. Pre- and post-intervention data from Teaching Strategies GOLD (TS GOLD), IGDIs, and teacher-created vocabulary assessment (TCVA) from shared storybooks served as the assessment measurements employed.

### **Participants**

Participants in this voluntary study were recruited from my classroom in a suburban Iowa school system. In the 2014-2015 school year, 4.2% of the district's K-12 population was identified as English Language Learners. Unfortunately this type of data is not disaggregated for the Pre-K population and as such is not available. To be eligible for the current study, students had to be identified as English Language Learners, as defined by the National Council of Teachers of English, speak a language other than English in their home, be aged 3 through 5 years, and attend the district's Pre-K program in my classroom. Thirteen students were identified

as meeting the criteria and were invited to participate through a voluntary consent letter translated into their home language (see Appendix 1). Permission was granted for eleven students to take part in the study. Six students were in the 4-year-old program and five were in the 3-year-old program. Within the 4-year-old participant population, four of the six had one previous year of preschool exposure and had some level of English speaking experience. None of the 3-year-old participants had any previous preschool exposure and four of the five indicated upon preschool intake the child had not previously spoken English. A coded numbering system was employed to protect student identities and data.

### **Research Design and Procedures**

The six-week study implemented two intervention strategies, one within the classroom and one in the home environment. The classroom intervention was a modified Dialogic Reading strategy. Each week, students participated in three small group shared reading experiences with me, the classroom researcher. The first reading of each book was a small group to introduce the story and targeted vocabulary words. The second reading emphasized the intentional teaching of vocabulary while reading the story (Collins, 2010). The third reading implemented dialogic questioning techniques to expand the students' oral language use during small group reading. Storybooks were chosen using Beck and McKeown's TIER system to identify target vocabulary words (see Appendix 2).

The second intervention was the use of Take Home Literacy Bags. Each bag consisted of a copy of the week's shared storybook, a list of Dialogic Reading questions (see Appendix 3) to encourage oral language use, and an audio recording of the story being read. A home language survey done upon preschool enrollment revealed that all participants had at least one parent in the home who could speak and read English. For this reason, weekly questions were sent home in English with the option for parents to request a home language copy if desired. No parents requested a home language copy of the story or questions.

### **Assessment Instruments Employed**

Assessment data used to evaluate the effects of these interventions were collected using two different assessment techniques – observational, anecdotal record taking and standardized screener assessment -- from three information sources: Teaching Strategies GOLD, IGDIs, and teacher-created vocabulary assessment (TCVA). TS GOLD uses observational anecdotal records to record growth on students in all domains including vocabulary growth and oral language skills. Specifically for this study, analysis of the fall and winter checkpoint data on objectives 8, 9, 37, and 38 were used to identify trends in development and look for growth in vocabulary and oral language skills (see Appendix 4). Objectives 8 and 9 assess students on the use of oral language skills both receptively and expressively by measuring the child's ability to understand and use language in their daily school experience. Objectives 37 and 38 measure growth specifically in the participant's English language acquisition.

Pre and post intervention assessment was done on vocabulary knowledge using the IGDIs and teacher created measures. Participants were assessed using the fall Picture Naming subtest of the IGDIs screener during week one and week 6 (see Appendix 5). At the conclusion the interventions, the winter and spring Picture Naming subtests were done to collect objective data on increased general vocabulary knowledge. The overlap of vocabulary between the fall and winter subtest was 11 of 15 items. The overlap of vocabulary between the fall and spring subtests was 5 items. Because of this difference in overlap, it was decided to include both winter and spring as posttests to determine whether a general vocabulary knowledge was built rather than one specific to the testing items seen in the fall subtest. Per the screener's instructions, a child is considered proficient when scoring a 9 on any of the Picture Naming subtests, regardless of first language.

Pre and post-testing using a teacher-created vocabulary assessment (TCVA) was done to assess the targeted, explicitly taught vocabulary of each book selection. The TCVA consisted of picture cards children were asked to identify orally. Each Monday, participants were pre-tested on that week's specific vocabulary and post-tested on the prior week's vocabulary. Additionally at

the beginning and conclusion of the implementation phase, assessment was completed using all targeted vocabulary. An analysis of these numbers was done to see if vocabulary knowledge is maintained over time or is localized to the teaching timeframe.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of these measures was a pre and post intervention comparison of each measure and a comparison of words known at the conclusion of the intervention to the number of words unknown at pretest. Pre-intervention data comprised fall TS GOLD checkpoint data observed in December, pre-intervention TCVA data, and IGDIs Picture Naming scores. An analysis of the winter checkpoint observed mid-March, coinciding with intervention week 6 and post-intervention scores on IGDIs and TCVA made it possible to determine whether growth occurred and to what degree oral language skills and vocabulary were affected during the intervention period.

Individual student pre- and post-intervention scores were compared to determine individual growth as well as for whole group analysis of growth. An ANOVA comparison between the two aged programs was done to see whether a difference in the efficacy of the intervention between age groups could be determined.

## **RESULTS**

Skill ability was assessed using observational data in the Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment system, pre- and post-intervention recall of vocabulary using picture cards, and administration of the Picture Naming subsection of the IGDIs, a standardized screener.

### **Oral Language Skills**

Results from TS GOLD indicate there was slight growth in oral language skills in some students. The skills experiencing the most notable growth, as indicated by the number of students moving up on the continuum, happened in the areas of oral language fluency as

expressed in Objective 9 (Uses language to express thoughts and needs); dimensions b (Speaks clearly), c (Uses conventional grammar), and d (Tells about another time and place), and Objective 38 (Demonstrates progress in speaking English). Participants moved an average of 1 continuum level in each of these objectives. Figure 1 (p 12) summarizes the number of students showing growth between fall (December) and winter (March) checkpoint data in TS GOLD.

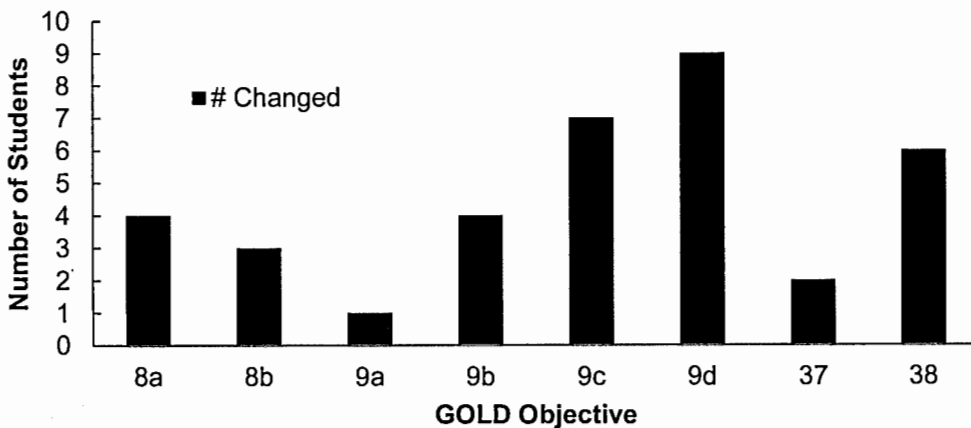


Figure 1. Number of students showing growth in continuum levels for a TS GOLD indicator

**Vocabulary Knowledge**

Classroom observations did not indicate growth in daily vocabulary use in a classroom setting. One student showed growth on Objective 9 (Uses language to express thoughts and needs); dimension a (Uses an expanding expressive vocabulary), moving 2 skill levels on the continuum. However, receptive language skills, including the understanding of English vocabulary, represented by Objectives 8 (Listens to and understands increasingly complex language) and 37 (Demonstrates progress in listening to and understanding English) show an increase by one-third of the students, moving an average of 1 skill level on the continuum.



Growth in vocabulary using the teacher created assessment showed consistent gain in targeted vocabulary knowledge during the specific testing period. An average of 1.41 words were gained between the specific pre and post-test vocabulary each week, over the six-week intervention period. The 3-year-old students showed greater gain with an average growth of 1.70 words while the 4-year-old students had an average growth of 1.16 words. Weekly growth of students is presented in Figures 2 through 7.

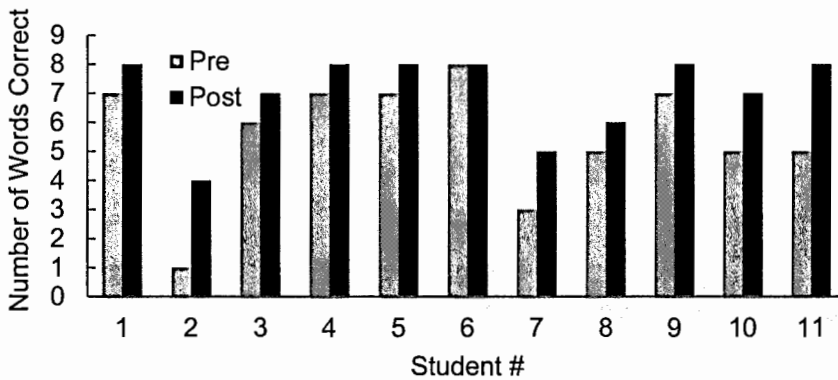


Figure 2. Comparison for each student of number of words correct before and after the Intervention for Week 1

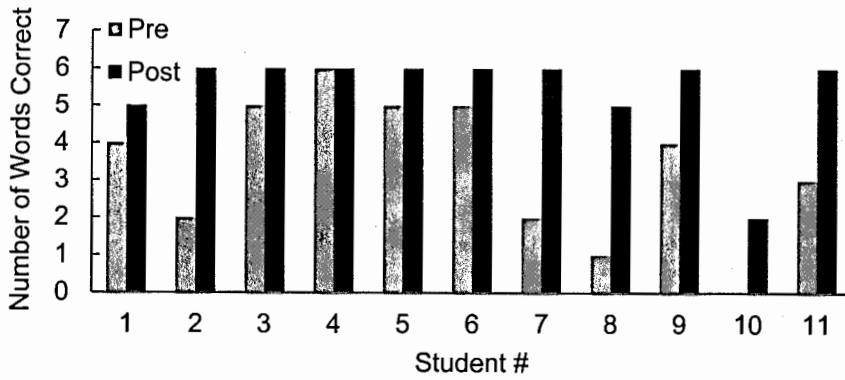


Figure 3. Comparison for each student of number of words correct before and after the intervention for Week 2

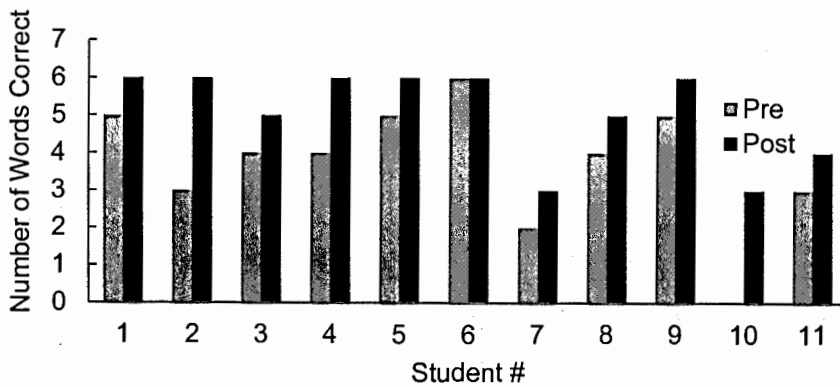


Figure 4. Comparison for each student of number of words correct before and after the intervention for Week 3

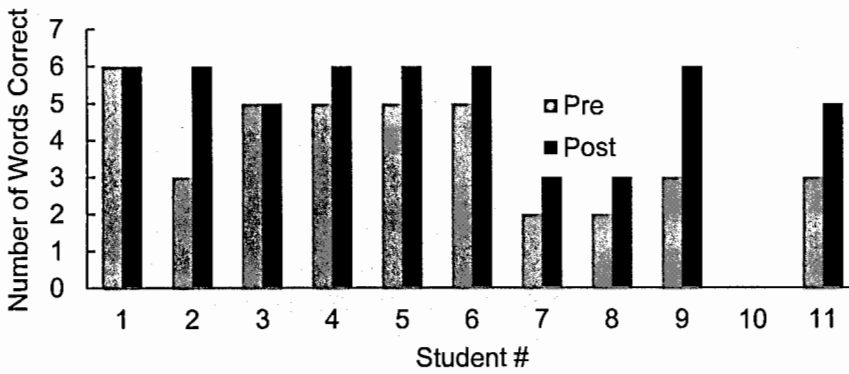


Figure 5. Comparison for each student of number of words correct before and after the intervention for Week 4. Note – Student 10 was absent throughout the duration of week 4.

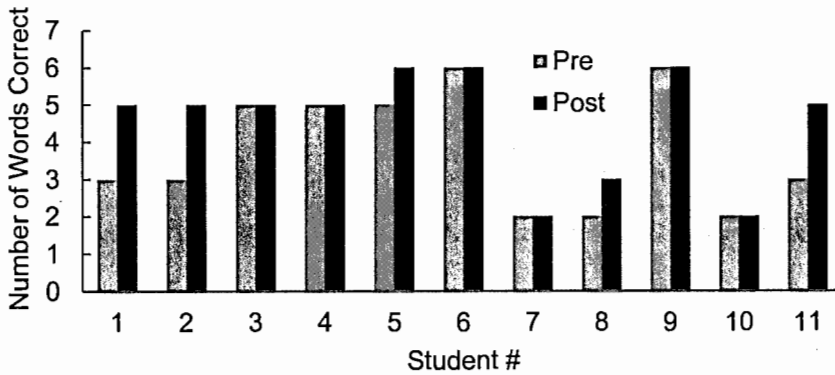


Figure 6. Comparison for each student of number of words correct before and after the intervention for Week 5

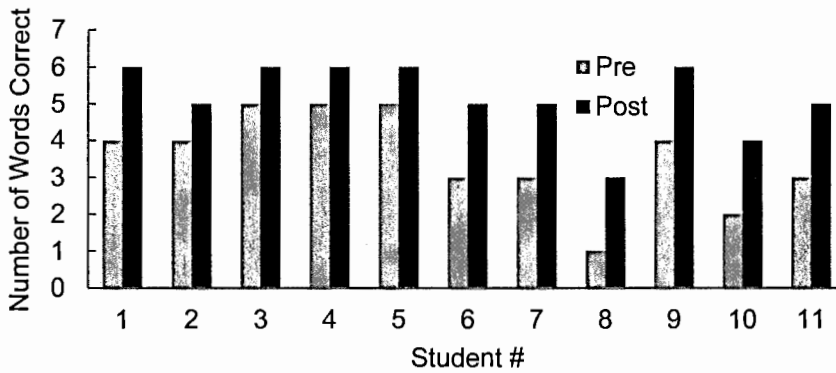


Figure 7. Comparison for each student of number of words correct before and after the intervention for Week 6

Cumulative data on the TCVA is reported in Table 1 (p16), and indicates that 91% of the participants retained some targeted vocabulary over time, with 2 of 11 maintaining all of the learned vocabulary. Three of the participants continued to grow vocabulary even after the instructional period as evidenced by a larger number known at post-intervention than known at weekly instruction time intervals. Evaluation of the pre and post data collection on all targeted vocabulary words indicated that students learned and retained an average of 67.82% of the unknown words over the six-week period.

Table 1

Number of Vocabulary Words Known on Teacher-Created Vocabulary Assessment across Time per Student, Pre-intervention to Post-intervention

Student #	Pre Intervention	At Intervention	Difference (Int - Pre Int)	Post Intervention	Difference (Post-int - Int)
1	29	36	7	34	-2
2	20	32	12	31	-1
3	30	34	4	30	-4

4	32	37	5	35	-2
5	32	38	6	35	-3
6	33	37	5	37	0
7	14	24	10	24	0
8	15	25	10	27	2
9	29	38	9	37	-1
10	9	18	9	20	2
11	20	33	13	34	1
Mean	24.5	34.5	8.18	34	-0.73

A comparison of the number of targeted vocabulary words learned against the number of targeted words students needed to learn is shown in Table 2 (p 17). Students showed an overall six-week average of 70.17% of targeted vocabulary words

Table 2

Number of Words Needed to Learn Compared to Number of Words Actually Learned by Students Each Week

Child	Week 1			Week 2			Week 3			Week 4			Week 5			Week 6		
	N	L	%	N	L	%	N	L	%	N	L	%	N	L	%	N	L	%
1	1	1	100	2	1	50	1	1	100	0	0	NA	3	2	67	2	2	100
2	7	3	43	4	4	100	3	3	100	3	3	100	3	2	67	2	1	50
3	2	1	50	1	1	100	2	1	50	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	100
4	1	1	100	0	0	NA	2	2	100	1	1	100	1	0	0	1	1	100
5	1	1	100	1	1	100	1	1	100	1	1	100	1	1	100	1	1	100
6	0	0	NA	1	1	100	0	0	NA	1	1	100	0	0	NA	3	2	67
7	5	2	67	4	4	100	4	1	25	4	1	25	4	0	0	3	2	67
8	3	1	100	5	4	80	2	1	50	4	1	25	4	1	25	5	2	40
9	1	1	100	2	2	100	1	1	100	3	3	100	0	0	NA	2	2	100
10	3	2	67	6	2	33	6	3	50	6	0	0	4	0	0	4	2	50
11	3	3	100	3	3	100	3	1	33	3	2	67	3	2	67	3	2	67
Mean	82.7%			86.3%			70.8%			68.6%			36.2%			67.8%		

Note. N = words need to learn; L = words learned.

being learned. With the exception of Week 5, the growth in learned words was consistently over 68%. As each week consisted of the same intervention activities, 3 Shared Storybook experiences with the same instructor and a Take Home Literacy Bag, the results of week 5 stand as an outlier.

A One-Way ANOVA analysis (Table 3) of the targeted vocabulary knowledge growth of the two age groups concluded there was no difference in intervention effect on one group over the other. The null hypothesis could not be rejected as  $p=0.2$  and no significant difference could be determined.

Table 3  
ANOVA of the Number of Teacher-Created Vocabulary Words Learned by Age Group

Summary						
Groups	Sample size	Sum	Mean	Variance		
3's	5	288	57.6	792.3		
4's	6	458	76.34	280.26		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F	p-level	F crit
Between Groups	957.1	1	957.1	1.88	0.2	5.1
Within Groups	4.57	9	507.84			
Total	5.53	10				

IGDIs scores show a general gain in vocabulary knowledge between the pre and post-testing of the fall subtest of the Picture Naming assessment. The pretest consisted of the fall subtest of the Picture Naming assessment. On average, participants gained 2.73 words between the pre- and posttest administration of the fall IGDIs subset. Additionally a first administration of the winter and spring subtests of the Picture Naming assessment was done at the end of the intervention period to determine if growth occurred in vocabulary words the participants had not

been exposed as part of the intervention. The overlap difference between fall and spring subsets was 10 new words. In regards to the new words, an overall average of 3.73 words was known. The data found on the use of the Picture naming subset of the IGDIs with 4-year-old students who are ELL showed growth over time in the pre and post testing of the fall subset and 4 of the 6 were considered proficient at the pretest. When assessed using the winter subset, all 6 participants were considered proficient according to the screener's instructions. As the number of overlap words in the spring subset decreased, the number of students considered proficient dropped. Table 4 (p 20) shows the raw scores of students in each subtest.



Table 4

Individual Growth and Development Indicators Pre- and Post-Intervention Scores and Differences of Students

Student #	Fall Pretest	Fall Post-test	Difference (Fall pre – post)	Percentage Gained	Winter	Spring
1	7	12	5	62.5%	11	9
2	2	7	5	38.5%	9	7
3	9	10	1	16.7%	11	8
4	10	12	2	40.0%	13	11
5	10	12	2	40.0%	14	11
6	12	13	1	33.3%	12	11
7	1	4	3	21.4%	3	2
8	2	5	3	23.1%	3	1
9	8	10	2	28.6%	10	9
10	1	4	3	21.4%	3	1
11	4	7	3	27.3%	7	5

**DISCUSSION**

This results of this study support past research in the area of using Dialogic Reading Strategies to teach vocabulary and oral language fluency in preschool English Language Learning students. The findings of the TCVA suggest that intentional teaching of selected vocabulary words leads to a growth in English vocabulary knowledge in preschool English Language Learners. Participants consistently showed an increase in the number of teacher selected vocabulary words learned each week, with an average of 8.2 vocabulary words learned at the time of instruction. Post intervention assessment showed students had a high rate of vocabulary retention with only an average of .7 words lost at the end of the intervention. It can be concluded from these results that using Shared Storybook experiences as a way to intentionally teach vocabulary words to preschool English Language Learners is a strong strategy that should be implemented.

Week 5 of the intervention period showed the lowest growth and appears to be an outlier with only .7 words learned on average and 36.322% growth in unknown words. These results are less than half of the other weeks' averages. I believe there are two possible reasons why these results could have occurred. The first reason is that students only attended school 3 days that week. While all three shared reading experiences were done that week, they were done on different days of the week than all other weeks, which could have changed how the children learned the words. The second is that 3 of the words – broom, straw, and tape - were less prevalent in the students' daily lives when compared to the other week's selected words. When I removed week 5 as an outlier, the average percentage of words learned rose almost 7% points from 70.17% to 76.96%.

The results of the Picture Naming subset of IGDIs indicate that a general vocabulary knowledge gain occurred over the course of the intervention. The use of Dialogic Reading and Questioning techniques to increase vocabulary and oral language skills through conversations adds to a student's exposure to new vocabulary words. As more children who are ELL enter our classrooms, it becomes increasingly important to help them build a large vocabulary prior to Kindergarten entry. These results show that implementing Shared Storybook experiences can do that. Research question #1 was "Will English Language Learners' targeted and overall vocabulary increase?" These results suggest a positive answer. Children's vocabulary increased from pre- to post-intervention.

While most students showed some growth in oral language skills on the TS GOLD continuum, it was not as much as I expected, specifically in the area of listening and using an expanding vocabulary. The greatest areas of growth in oral language skills were in speaking and using grammatical English rather than one or two word utterances to convey meaning. An increase in using grammatical English is important to students' later English reading abilities (Kiefer, 2012) and as such shows the Dialogic Reading strategies employed in this study to be consistent with earlier research studies. Research question #2 was – "Will English Language Learners' oral language skills increase?" Again these results suggest a positive answer.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Limitations

One limitation to this study was my inability to determine which of the two interventions showed more impact on the participants' skills. Future research would need a way to separate the results of the two interventions to create a better understanding of the role each one played in the participants learning. If implementing this study again, I would use one or the other of the intervention strategies rather than both.

A second limitation to this study is the use of anecdotal observations as the sole means of assessing oral language skills. Future research could include a more objective means of assessing these skills in conjunction with TS GOLD. The suburban school district this research was done in utilizes Tennessee English Language Placement Assessment (TELPA) to screen students for possible ELL service needs. Working in conjunction with the ELL department or using a standardized screener would provide additional data to create a more complete picture.

A third limitation is the small sample size. Increasing the sample size would give a broader picture of the population as a whole and would be more transferable.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Further research on the Pre-K ELL population in Iowa and beyond needs to be undertaken. Public school population statistics as published by the Iowa Department of Education show the number of students entering school with little to no English increases each year (2006, 2015). Researching the effect of specific strategies on English language skills is important as we attempt to close the gap between our native and non-native English speakers.

For a replication of this study, I suggest that the researcher make three specific changes. First, use of a larger sample size to ensure the results are transferable to a larger population. Second, separate the two interventions. Using them in conjunction with each other was a way to encourage practice with English language in the home but there was no way to discern which

intervention was created the results. The third change is to include a standardized oral language screener. This study relied on only one source of data for oral language skills growth and more data would create a more complete picture.

A separate research possibility is the use of Take Home Literacy Bags with non-English speaking parents. While this study had at least one parent in each home that read and spoke English, that is increasingly not the case across the state. An addition of bilingual books and a parent education piece on how to encourage Shared Storybook experiences in the home could enhance the research on this.

While unrelated to this study, the data found on the use of the Picture Naming subset of the IGDIs with 4 year-old students who are ELL was intriguing and warrants further research. As the number of overlapping words between subsets decreased, the number of non-proficient students increased. While this is just one of the five subsets of the IGDIs, it shows further research on the use of IGDIs with students who are ELL is needed, especially as the state looks towards mandating its use in Universal Pre-K.

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## Appendix 1

January 22, 2016

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As part of my Masters of Education program at the University of Northern Iowa, I am conducting a research study. The purpose of this research project is to learn whether different things I do, as a teacher, help your child to learn better. I am asking for your permission to use work done by your child in class and his/her test scores for my research project.

I will be looking at the effects of two types of normal classroom activities in the next 6 weeks - Shared Storybook Reading and Take Home Literacy Bags. All instructions will be explained in terms that you and your child can understand. For the Shared Storybook Reading activity, students will work on learning vocabulary in small groups during class time. With the Take Home Literacy Bags, each Friday, students will bring home a bag that includes our weekly book for you to read to your child, a list of questions for you to talk about with your child on the book, and a CD of the book in both audio and video form. Each Monday your child will return the bag to the classroom.

I will also use scores from assessments that all students take to see whether your child's performance improves. These are the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment system and the Individual Growth and Development Indicators Screener.

Risks are no different than for normal classroom activities, and there are no direct benefits to your child for allowing me to use his/her information in my study, but it will possibly help future students. No information will ever be reported about your child by name or in any other way that could identify him or her. All results will be reported as a group or average level only. A summary of the research results will be provided to the University of Northern Iowa and the Johnston Community School District and could also be presented at a conference or published in a teaching journal. Any participants interested in a summary of the results are welcome to request them by emailing me at [angie.butler@johnston.k12.ia.us](mailto:angie.butler@johnston.k12.ia.us).

So that I will not know which parents agree to participate and which do not, these forms will be returned to my school administrator, who will keep them for me until the school year is over. Allowing me to use your child's work and scores is voluntary, but I hope that you will consider having his/her work included in my study.

If you have any questions or want more information, please call me at 515-278-6338 or email me at [angie.butler@johnston.k12.ia.us](mailto:angie.butler@johnston.k12.ia.us). Questions can also be directed to my administrator, Joy Palmer at 515-278-0470, [jpalmer@johnston.k12.ia.us](mailto:jpalmer@johnston.k12.ia.us) or my UNI faculty advisor, Dr. Linda Fitzgerald at 319-273-2214, [lfitzgerald@uni.edu](mailto:lfitzgerald@uni.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Northern Iowa Institutional Review Board Administrator, Anita Gordon by phone at 319-273-6148 or by email at [anita.gordon@uni.edu](mailto:anita.gordon@uni.edu).

Sincerely,

Angela Butler  
Johnston Community School District – Pre-K Teacher

Please indicate whether or not you wish to allow your child to participate in this project by checking one of the statements below, signing your name and returning it sealed to school administration in the attached envelope. A copy of this form will be made and returned to you for your records.

**Participation in this study is voluntary. At any time you and your child are free to end participation.**

\_\_\_\_\_ I give permission for my child's work and test scores to be included in Angela Butler's study on increasing English oral language skills and vocabulary development in Pre-K English Language Learners.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not grant permission for my child's work and test scores to be included in Angela Butler's study on increasing English oral language skills and vocabulary development in Pre-K English Language Learners.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Parent/Guardian Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

22. januar, 2016

Dragi roditelji/staratelji:

Radim na istraživačkom projektu, koji je dio moga magistarskog rada na univerzitetu (The University of Northern Iowa). Svrha ovog istraživačkog projekta je utvrditi na koje sve različite načine, ja kao učiteljica, mogu pomoći vašem djetetu u boljem učenju. Pitam vas za dozvolu da koristim radove i rezultate testova vašeg djeteta, urađene na nastavi, u svom istraživačkom projektu.

Razmatraću uticaj dviju vrsta razrednih uobičajenih aktivnosti u narednih 6 sedmica - Shared Storybook Reading (Podijeljeno čitanje) and Take Home Literacy Bags (Nošenje knjiga kući na čitanje). Sve instrukcije će biti jasno objašnjene i vama i vašem djetetu. Tokom podijeljenog čitanja (Shared Storybook Reading), učenici će raditi na bogaćenju rječniku u jeziku i radiće se u manjim grupama u toku nastave. U vezi nošenja knjiga kući na čitanje (Take Home Literacy Bags), učenici će svakog petka donositi kući knjigu u vrećici i to će biti knjiga koju smo čitali te sedmice. Vas, kao roditelje, zamoljavamo da čitate vašem djetetu i da razgovarate o knjizi sa vašim djetetom. Lista pitanja će biti priložena knjizi, kao i CD knjige u audio i video formi. Svakog ponedjeljka, vaše dijete treba da vrati knjigu u razred.

Ja ću koristiti rezultate testova vašeg djeteta, koje sva djeca rade, kako bih utvrdila kako vaše dijete napreduje. Ovo su strategije/metode podučavanja, tzv. Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment system and the Individual Growth and Development Indicators Screener.

Ovo se ne odražava na već postojeće razredne aktivnost, niti će biti od direktne pomoći vašem djetetu, ukoliko mi dozvolite korištenje navedenih informacija u mom istraživačkom radu, ali će vjerovatno pomoći budućoj generaciji djece. Informacije vezane za vaše dijete nikada neće biti javno objavljene pod imenom vašeg djeteta ili na bilo koji drugi način će biti prepoznato kao rad vašeg djeteta. Koristiću rezultate testova i aktivnosti bez korištenja imena vašeg djeteta. Rezultati će biti objavljeni grupno i samo će se razmatrati prosjek uspjeha. Konačan rezultat uspjeha će biti dat univerzitetu (University of Northern Iowa) i Johnston školskom distriktu (Johnston Community School District), što bi moglo biti predstavljeno na konferencijama ili objavljeno u obrazovnom časopisu. Svi zainteresovani učesnici mogu zahtijevati uvid u rezultate putem e-mail adrese [angie.butler@johnston.k12.ia.us](mailto:angie.butler@johnston.k12.ia.us).

Ja neću znati koji roditelji jesu, a koji roditelji nisu dali dozvolu za učešće u mom istraživačkom radu i zbog toga će ovi formulari biti vraćeni mome školskom rukovodiocu, koji će ih zadržati do kraja školske godine. Nadam se da ćete mi dozvoliti korištenje rada i rezultata testova vašeg djeteta u mome istraživačkom radu. Vaša dozvola je dobrovoljna.

Ukoliko imate pitanja ili želite više informacija, molim vas, nazovite me na 515-278-6338 mi pošaljite e-mail na [angie.butler@johnston.k12.ia.us](mailto:angie.butler@johnston.k12.ia.us). Pitanja mogu biti upućena i mome rukovodiocu, Joy Palmer at 515-278-0470, [jpalmer@johnston.k12.ia.us](mailto:jpalmer@johnston.k12.ia.us) ili mome savjetniku na univerzitetu, UNI faculty advisor, Dr. Linda Fitzgerald na 319-273-2214, [lfitzgerald@uni.edu](mailto:lfitzgerald@uni.edu). Ukoliko imate nekih pitanja o vašim pravima kao učesnicima u istraživačkom radu, možete kontaktirati University of Northern Iowa Institutional Review Board Administrator, Anita Gordon na telefon 319-273-6148 ili poslati e-mail na [anita.gordon@uni.edu](mailto:anita.gordon@uni.edu).

Srdačno,

Angela Butler

Johnston Community School District – Pre-K Teacher (Učiteljica predškolskog obrazovanja)

Molimo vas, izjasnite se da li dozvoljavate ili ne da vaše dijete učestvuje u ovom projektu i označite vaš odgovor u ispod navedenom, onda potpišite i zatvorenu kovertu pošaljite školskom rukovodiocu. Kopija će vam biti poslana za vašu dokumentaciju.

**Učešće u ovom projektu je dobrovoljno. Možete u bilo koje vrijeme povući svoje učešće i učešće vašeg djeteta u toku ovog projekta.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Dajem dozvolu da se radovi i rezultati testova moga djeteta mogu koristiti u Angela Butler istraživačkom projektu za povećanje razvoja usmenih vještina u engleskom jeziku i rječniku u predškolskom obrazovanju za djecu koja uče engleski kao drugi jezik (Angela Butler's study on increasing English oral language skills and vocabulary development in Pre-K English Language Learners).

\_\_\_\_\_ Ne odobravam da se radovi i rezultati testova moga djeteta mogu koristiti u Angela Butler istraživačkom projektu za povećanje razvoja usmenih vještina u engleskom jeziku i rječniku u predškolskom obrazovanju za djecu koja uče engleski kao drugi jezik (Angela Butler's study on increasing English oral language skills and vocabulary development in Pre-K English Language Learners).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Potpis roditelja/staratelja  
slovima

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ime roditelja/startelja štampanim

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ime djeteta štampanim slovima

\_\_\_\_\_  
Datum

(BOSNIAN)

**Appendix 2**

## Selected Books List

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin Jr. (1996)

Words – bear, bird, horse, children, frog, duck, dog, cat

Dr. Seuss's ABC by Dr. Seuss (1963, 1993)

Words – hat, doughnut, tree, jelly, umbrella, elephant

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle (1994)

Words – butterfly, apple, strawberry, caterpillar, leaf, moon

Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown (1947)

Words – rabbit, balloon, spoon, comb, bowl, chair

If You Give a Mouse a Cookie by Laura Joffe Numeroff (1994)

Words – cookie, mouse, straw, scissors, tape, broom

Pete the Cat The Wheels on the Bus by Eric Litwin (2013)

Words – bus, wheels, cat, lights, door, horn

## Appendix 3

## Literacy Bag #1

Thank you for taking time to help me with my Masters project by reading with your child. Please take a few minutes to read or listen to this story with your child. You can use the prompts below to start conversations about the book. On Monday, please return the book bag back to school.

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin Jr.

- What color is the bear? (brown)
- What did the brown bear see? (bird, red bird)
- What do you think the yellow duck will see? (answers will vary, blue horse)
- Do you think horses are blue? Have you ever seen a blue horse? What color horses have you seen? (answers will vary, white, brown, black)
- How do frogs move? (hop, jump)
- What is the purple cat doing? (licking his leg, cleaning him/herself)
- Who saw the white dog? (the purple cat)
- What is a sheep's fur called? (wool)
- Where do goldfish live? (water, fishbowl, aquarium, ocean, lake, river)
- What did the goldfish see? (teacher, mother, person, woman, boy)
- Can you count how many children there are? How many? (9)
- Can you name all the things the children saw? (brown bear, red bird, yellow duck, blue horse, green frog, purple cat, white dog, black sheep, goldfish, teacher)

At the end of this book, there are a number of activities you can do with your child, but they are not required nor will they be a part of the study project.

**Appendix 4**

Teaching Strategies GOLD Objectives

#8 – Listens to and understands increasingly complex language

- a. Comprehends language
- b. Follows directions

#9 – Uses language to express thoughts and needs

- a. Uses an expanding expressive vocabulary
- b. Speaks clearly
- c. Uses conventional grammar
- d. Tells about another time or place

#37 – Demonstrates progress in listening to and understanding English

#38 – Demonstrates progress in speaking English

**Appendix 5**

IGDIs Picture Naming Assessment Sample



**Now it's your turn.** (Show child card)

<p>If <u>correct</u>:</p>	<p>If <u>incorrect</u>, <u>don't know</u>, or <u>no response</u>:</p>
<p><b>That's right, it's a bear.</b> (Go to next card)</p>	<p><b>That's a picture of a bear.</b> <b>Try again, what is this a picture of?</b> If <u>correct</u> provide positive feedback and go to next card. If <u>incorrect</u>, <u>don't know</u> or <u>no response</u>, discontinue test.</p>

**Bear**

**Sample C**