A case study using guided reading and teacher read-alouds while monitoring English language learners' and native English speakers' reading achievement

Kelsey M. Baker
A CASE STUDY USING GUIDED READING AND TEACHER READ-ALOUDS
WHILE MONITORING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS’ AND NATIVE
ENGLISH SPEAKERS’ READING ACHIEVEMENT

An Abstract of a Thesis
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Specialist in Education: School Psychology

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ABSTRACT

The number of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the United States continues to increase (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002); therefore, schools and educators are affected by the growing differences in students’ language skills, prior experiences, and progress. This research addresses the need for understanding ELLs and how ELLs benefit from adults effectively reading aloud to them. Further research is needed on effective reading instruction for ELLs for several reasons. First, teachers are becoming ELL teachers by default and feel overwhelmed because of the responsibility to teach both language and content (Gersten, 2002). Second, an achievement gap exists between ELLs and native speakers, especially in the content area of reading (Alanis, 2004). Third, ELLs greatly benefit from having books read aloud because they hear new vocabulary, sentences, ideas, and text structures (Alanis, 2004), especially during teacher read-alouds. Reading aloud models language patterns, so ELLs can imitate sound and sentence structures which increase their vocabulary (Vivas, 1996). Yet, the vocabulary and fluency gains between ELLs and native speakers after utilizing guided reading and teacher read-alouds are uncertain.

The goal of this study was to read aloud to students using guided reading and teacher read-alouds, then compare growth of reading accuracy, fluency, comprehension, phonological processing, phonemic correspondence, vocabulary, and correctly used language structures between the ELLs and native speakers while considering prior experiences and instruction. Specifically, this research answered the following questions: (1) What absolute growth in reading accuracy and decoding,
fluency, comprehension, phonological processing, phonemic correspondence, vocabulary, and correctly used language structures is seen in this group of ELLs when their teacher is using guided reading and teacher read-alouds? (2) How does vocabulary and fluency growth differ between ELLs and native speakers when a teacher is using guided reading and teacher read-alouds? (3) What methods, materials, and communication does the teacher use while reading aloud to ELLs and native speakers?
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Imagine you are an elementary school teacher in a small town of 10,000. The students in your class come from middle-class, supportive parents. The majority of the students, if not all of them, are white. You have been teaching the past 15 years, have a four-year degree in elementary education, and keep up with the latest education research and trends. Because of your experience in education, you are considered a veteran teacher in your school, and newer teachers come to you with questions and to ask advice. A meat packing plant has recently been built in your town, and 300 new jobs are available. The town begins to flood with immigrants and non-native speakers of English; they need homes and a school for their children. Practically overnight, you have six students in your class that do not speak any English. You are responsible for teaching them English and the content subjects, along with teaching the rest of the students. You have no prior experience teaching English Language Learners (ELLs), and neither do your colleagues. How will you communicate with the students since they do not know English? How will you teach them? Will they understand classroom rules? Will they make friends? How will you know if they’re learning? What assessments will they take? How will you communicate with parents? With little notice and no ELL training, you have become an ELL teacher.

English Language Learners (ELLs) are students living in the United States who do not speak English as their native language. Not only is the fact of ELLs learning English an education issue, but it is also an economic issue, a civic issue, a social issue,
and a national security issue (Lenski & Ehlers-Zavala, 2006). The increase in the number of ELLs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002) has led to changes in education laws (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). When Congress passed Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or the Bilingual Education Act, in 1968, the legislation created bilingual education programs that used instruction in two languages. One of these languages had to be English for teaching purposes (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). In 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act replaced Title VII, or the Bilingual Education Act. The new No Child Left Behind Act is a formula grant program designed to provide better instructional and financial support for schools (National Association for Bilingual Education, 2005).

Teachers of ELLs must be aware of students' prior knowledge and language development before instruction begins (Elley, 1997). Since there is a strong correlation between level of vocabulary and level of reading development (Elley, 1997), ELLs need immediate and visual access to vocabulary to develop English proficiency. One way to expose ELLs to vocabulary is by immersing them in a language rich environment that is meaningful and draws upon prior experiences (Alanis, 2004; Athaide-Shannon, 2005). However, with the increases of ELLs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002), many teachers' roles have changed. Teachers with no training and little background knowledge are becoming ELL teachers by default (Gersten, 2002). According to Gersten (1999), 25.3% of teachers who teach ELLs have had no English language acquisition or ELL instruction strategy training. Teachers and administrators did not have accessible and appropriate instruction to meet the language needs of ELLs.
An achievement gap exists between ELLs and native English speakers. The widest achievement gap exists in the content area of reading (Alanis, 2004). One estimate says that ELLs require two years to develop social communications and five to seven years to develop academic competencies (Hutchinson, Whitely, Smith, & Connors, 2003). It is a challenging task for ELLs to learn both language and academic content at the same time (Gersten, 2002). Although it depends on a student’s age, native speakers in English begin with a four to five year advantage over ELL students because of their prior experiences in English. ELL students are put at even more of a disadvantage when they do not develop strong vocabularies, which may result in hindered comprehension and beginning reading skills (Hutchinson et al., 2003). However, gains are most frequent when teachers utilize the student’s primary language. When a student’s primary language can be used along with English, the student sees language connections (Ulanoff & Pucci, 1999).

There are two main goals of reading aloud to ELLs. The goal of reading aloud is to create independent readers (Kimbell-Lopez, 2003). Another purpose of reading aloud is to enhance interactive activities between adults and ELLs to stimulate questions and encourage conversation (Vivas, 1996). ELLs receive immediate and visual access to vocabulary and exposure to English when adults read aloud to them. Reading aloud, whether using shared or guided reading methods or teacher read-alouds, models language patterns to ELLs, and students can imitate sounds and sentence structures (Vivas, 1996). When teachers read aloud, ELLs begin to distinguish that print and speech are different, but that both print and speech have meaning (Kimbell-Lopez, 2003). Additionally, the
students' understanding of the relationship between oral and written language becomes clearer when adults read aloud to ELLs (Brabhan & Lynch-Brown, 2002).

ELLs are able to focus on greater semantic units when they are read to because they do not have to focus on fluently decoding one word at a time. Rather, they can focus on comprehending meaning at the sentence and text levels (Amer, 1997). ELLs benefit from having books read aloud to them in a shared reading, guided reading, teacher read-alouds, or in a balanced reading program because they hear new vocabulary, sentences, ideas, and text structures (Alanis, 2004). Reading aloud models language patterns, so ELLs can imitate sound and sentence structures which increase their vocabulary (Vivas, 1996). There are also content and cultural benefits to reading aloud to ELLs. When ELLs of all ages are read to, they often develop a pleasure for reading. Information books, or nonfiction books, can be motivating because they tap into the student's interests, and students can begin "knowledge seeking" (Dreher, 2003). This may lead to enjoyment across different content areas (Elley, 1991). ELLs also benefit from stories read aloud because they gain awareness of cultural norms (Meier, 2003).

Exposure to English and reading aloud significantly increase English language acquisition (Chang, 1994). However, knowledge about and understanding of words is one of the most important pieces of early reading achievement and comprehension. Teachers must teach strategies to ELLs that good readers practice and model making meaning with the text since ELLs are often unfamiliar with English and lack relevant prior experiences (Kimbell-Lopez, 2003). The opportunity to hear nonfiction helps build relevant background knowledge at an early age (Olyer & Barry, 1996). The effectiveness of
reading aloud is based on how the teacher reads to the students (Brabham & Lynch-Brown, 2002). It is more beneficial when a child becomes actively involved in the literacy experience by viewing rich illustrations, predicting, retelling, or asking questions rather than simply reading aloud daily (Arnold & Colburn, 2005). Teachers need to model predicting, retelling, and asking questions so students can learn how to become actively involved. This needs to be reinforced in later reading and writing activities to capitalize on the full benefits of reading aloud (Speaker, Taylor, & Karmen, 2004).

**Definitions**

The following words will be defined: English Language Learners (ELLs), guided reading, shared reading, teacher read-alouds, and a balanced literacy program.

**ELLs (English Language Learners):** Students who do not speak English as their native language (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

**Shared reading:** A method of reading aloud, is a daily time set aside for reading and rereading favorite rhymes, songs, poems, chants, and stories to and with children. Through this method, children can see the text, and they are active participants in reading and begin to understand concepts of print. Children from kindergarten to college can see reading as pleasurable and meaningful through this method (Kimbell-Lopez, 2003). Big books or enlarged text are examples of materials used for shared reading.

**Guided reading:** The goal of using guided reading, another method of reading aloud, is to pique children’s interest in the story, relate the story to prior knowledge, provide a readable text, teach reading strategies, process the text, and ultimately produce confident and fluent readers. During a guided reading lesson, the teacher works with a small group...
of children that are at a similar reading level. After the teacher introduces the book and connects it to previous experiences, he or she walks the students through the book’s text, emphasizing unfamiliar vocabulary and concepts. The students then read the text aloud simultaneously and independently. The teacher monitors the students reading and strategies and scaffolds their use of strategies as needed. After reading, the teacher engages the students in discussion and performs a mini-lesson about a reading strategy, grammar, writing, or another learning activity after the reading. If appropriate, the teacher may need to read the text aloud first. (Kimbell-Lopez, 2003).

Teacher read-alouds: This type of reading aloud takes place when a teacher reads aloud text that children could not read independently. The students, however, should be able to comprehend by listening. The focus of a real-aloud is meaning and there is not a focus on the print. The teacher and students interact by asking questions, making predictions, and providing connections. Through these interactions and with the use of scaffolding, all students are able to learn new vocabulary and comprehend the text that would normally be too difficult for them to read independently (Militante, 2006).

Balanced literacy program: This frequently includes: oral language, guided reading, shared reading, teacher read-alouds, independent/buddy reading, vocabulary, word study, modeled/interactive writing, independent writing, and literacy centers. Home-school collaboration is part of the balanced literacy program to support the school learning (Wienczek, Vazzano, & Reizian, 1999).
Purpose

This study addresses the need for understanding the academic needs of ELLs and how ELLs benefit from adults effectively reading aloud to them. Further research is needed on effective reading instruction for ELLs for several reasons. First, teachers are becoming ELL teachers by default and feel overwhelmed because of the responsibility to teach both language and content (Gersten, 2002). Second, an achievement gap exists between ELLs and native speakers, especially in the content area of reading (Alanis, 2004). Third, ELLs greatly benefit from having books read aloud because they hear new vocabulary, sentences, ideas, and text structures (Alanis, 2004), especially during guided reading and teacher read-alouds. Reading aloud models language patterns, so ELLs can imitate sound and sentence structures which in turn increases their vocabulary (Vivas, 1996). Yet, the vocabulary and fluency gains between ELLs and native speakers after utilizing guided reading and teacher read-alouds are uncertain.

The goal of this study is to read aloud to students using guided reading and teacher read-alouds, then compare growth of reading accuracy and decoding, fluency, comprehension, phonological processing, phonemic correspondence, vocabulary, and correct use of language structures between a group of ELLs and native speakers. Prior experiences and reading instruction also will be taken into consideration. Specifically, this research will answer the following questions: (1) What absolute growth in reading accuracy and decoding, fluency, comprehension, phonological processing, phonemic correspondence, vocabulary, and correctly used language structures is seen in this group of ELLs when their teacher is using guided reading and teacher read-alouds? (2) How
does growth in reading accuracy and decoding, fluency, comprehension, phonological processing, phonemic correspondence, vocabulary, and correctly used language structures differ between these ELLs and native speakers when their teacher is using guided reading and teacher read-alouds? (3) What methods, materials, and communication does the teacher use while reading aloud to ELLs and native speakers?

Summary

Teaching ELLs is no longer an unfamiliar concept to many educators. The following chapter will provide a review of the literature regarding the benefits of reading aloud to ELLs, the achievement gap between native English speakers and ELLs, and how English exposure affects language proficiency. It will also discuss how language proficiency and literary skills are fostered when teachers or parents read aloud to ELLs.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

English Language Learners (ELLs) are students living in the United States who speak English as a non-native language. They can be sons or daughters of immigrants, or they can be a first generation U.S. citizen (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Besides the label of ELLs, students learning English have been given other labels: ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), ESL (English as a Second Language), EAL (English as an Additional Language), and LEP (Limited English Proficient; Hutchinson et al., 2003). These terms are used in relation to the context of teaching and learning English, so ELLs will be used in this chapter as it encompasses all students who do not speak English as their native language. Non-native English speakers comprised over three million students in the public school system in 1999-2000 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2004).

As the number of ELLs in the United States has increased (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002), schools and educators have been affected by the changing student population. Even if a teacher does not have ELL certification or knowledge about teaching ELLs, it is likely that he or she will still work with an ELL in his or her career. This chapter will describe the gains in vocabulary, comprehension, and other reading skills made by ELL learners when adults read aloud to them. Then, the achievement gap between ELLs and native speakers, effective ways to read aloud, and the literary benefits of reading aloud to ELLs will be discussed.
Increasing Number of English Language Learners

In 1990 in the United States, 32 million people or 14% of the population over the age of five spoke a language other than English in their home. By 2000 that number had risen to nearly 47 million, or nearly 18% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). This increase affected some regions of the United States more as some regions have higher concentrations of ELLs in their public schools (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

The Western states had the greatest number of ELLs in public schools in both 1993-1994 (1.1 million) and 1999-2000 (1.7 million). The West also had half of the nation’s total ELLs; 16% of their public school students, one in six, were identified as ELLs in 1999-2000, compared to 12% in 1993-1994. The number of ELLs in the Midwest and South also increased between 1993-1994 and 1999-2000, from 3.5% to 4.5% in the South and 1.4% to 2.6% in the Midwest. In comparison, the number of ELLs in the Northeast decreased from 4.4% in 1993-1994 to 3.8% in 1999-2000. The Midwest still has the lowest number of ELLs of any region (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2004). This steady increase of non-English speakers and the disproportionate numbers of ELLs throughout the U.S. has created a need to better understand ELL students and to change educational laws that provide ELLs with an appropriate education (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

History of Laws Concerning English Language Learners

Federal Law

As the number of ELLs has increased (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002), laws pertaining to their education have also changed. Federal law requires that all ELLs be
provided with a free and appropriate public education, which includes time for academic content learning and an opportunity for English language development. State laws oversee requirements at the student's level, and districts are given the ownership to choose programs and curriculum. Districts are also given the choice of how to use the students' first languages in instruction (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

**Bilingual Education Act**

The beginning of federal support for bilingual education in the United States can be traced to 1968 when Congress passed Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This legislation created bilingual education programs that used two languages, one of which had to be English, for instruction (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Since that time, bilingual education programs have developed two common goals: to teach English and to provide the core curriculum using the students' home language while they are gaining English language proficiency (Lessow-Hurley, 1990).

Since the passage of Title VII, many kinds of bilingual education programs have been created to meet the needs of ELLs. The Department of Education has reserved funding for bilingual education training, bilingual resource centers, and research (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). In 1994, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs created grants as part of the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA). These grants were distributed to local education agencies (Holland & Soifer, 2001) that provide financial support to schools with high numbers of ELLs.
No Child Left Behind Act

After 34 years, Title VII, or the Bilingual Education Act, was replaced with the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002. Title VII provided grants for bilingual services directly to school districts. In contrast, No Child Left Behind is a formula grant program designed to provide better instructional and financial support for schools by distributing money on a national, state, and local level based on the number of limited-English proficient and immigrant students in a district. Under the No Child Left Behind Act spending for ELLs has increased. The English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act is the new name for Title III and represents a change for English Language Learners (National Association for Bilingual Education, 2005).

Title III requires that each state adopt English Language Proficiency Standards which link to the state’s learning standards. Each state must also have “Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives.” In addition to Title III, Title I requires that all ELLs in K-12 must be assessed in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Lenski & Ehlers-Zavala, 2006). On October 27, 2005, the Senate voted to increase spending for English Language Acquisition State Grants by $7.65 million which will increase the funding for ELLs by 1.1%. The National Association for Bilingual Education, teachers of ELLs, and the community of ELLs consider the increase in funds to be a small victory towards providing effective instruction for ELLs (National Association for Bilingual Education, 2005).
Effective ELL Instruction

ELL teachers must be aware of students’ prior knowledge before instruction begins. Teachers build upon prior knowledge and scaffold, or allow students to work self-reliantly while offering them adequate support, ELLs to higher levels of language development. Having a language rich environment is another key component of ELL instruction and is a tool to help students reach language proficiency. Language rich classrooms have labeled signs, posted schedules, interesting magazines, and everyday language visible for students to see. Since there is a strong correlation between level of vocabulary and level of reading development (Elley, 1997), ELLs need immediate and visual access to vocabulary to develop English proficiency (Athaide-Shannon, 2005).

Alanis (2004) found that effective ELL literacy instruction must include rich language experiences that are meaningful and draw upon students’ prior experiences. Not only do ELLs learn English more quickly when the texts are meaningful, but being with rich vocabulary, interesting illustrations, and follow-up strategies related to the reading are the key elements that foster understanding (Athaide-Shannon, 2005). When meaningful text is read to them, ELLs learn the significance of English (Elley, 1991). In addition, text must be significant and relate to the lives of ELLs in order for follow-up learning activities to be purposeful (Meier, 2003).

This important concept of meaningful text, or text that relates to the lives of ELLs, is critical to academic success for ELLs. ELLs who are encouraged to read and share about meaningful, interesting, and illustrated books learn English more quickly (Elley, 1991). Increasing reading comprehension and developing vocabulary are further
benefits from exposure to text. Reading aloud to ELLs serves as a means of exposing students to text, especially when a teacher uses an interactive style of reading aloud (Ulanoff & Pucci, 1999). Growth in reading comprehension subsequently fosters writing, speaking, and other language skills (Elley, 1991).

According to Lazaraton (2003), it is helpful for the ELL teacher to know English and the other language of the students. This way the teacher can act as a language mediator when students need further explanation in their primary language. However, it is more important that the ELL teacher is fluent in English and has an understanding of both cultures involved. It is debated the significance and impact of the teacher having an English native-like accent. Without the teacher having an understanding of different cultures, the selected content may not be meaningful or relevant to ELLs. To become a certified ELL instructor, teachers need to add an ELL endorsement to their teaching license. The 18 semester hour requirements in Iowa cover the following topics: (1) knowledge of linguistics, (2) knowledge of pedagogy, and (3) knowledge of cultural and linguistic diversity. In addition to the class work, a supervised teaching experience with ELL students is required to obtain an endorsement (Department of English Language and Literature, 2006). California and Arizona are adopting policies requiring all new teachers to have an ELL or Structured English Immersion (SEI) endorsement. The SEI endorsement is not as rigorous as that for ELL, but it still provides teachers with critical strategies to educate ELLs even if they are not their primary content teacher. Because No Child Left Behind requires teachers to be highly qualified teachers, beginning in the fall of 2006 ELL teachers in all 50 states must have an ELL endorsement (Arizona State
Board of Education, 2004). Having quality professional connections or relationships is also crucial to any beginning or veteran ELL teacher (Gersten, 1999).

ELL Teachers by Default

In addition to changing laws, the increase of ELLs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002) has also changed teachers' roles. Teachers with no training and little background knowledge about ELLs are becoming ELL teachers by default. When non-native speakers move into a school district, the district and teacher become responsible for the students' education. Many teachers feel overwhelmed because of their responsibility to teach language along with content (Gersten, 2002). According to Gersten's (1999) qualitative study that examined four ELL teachers' instruction with ELLs in grades four through six, 25% of the teachers who taught ELLs had no training in English language acquisition or ELL instruction strategies. His observations of and interviews with fourth through sixth grade teachers found that most ELL teachers only spoke English and did not have any training to teach ELLs. Teachers and administrators did not meet the language needs of ELLs, and the curriculum and instruction were ambiguous and not meaningful.

Gersten (2002) observed 26 ELL teachers from San Diego and El Paso that pushed ELLs to express themselves flawlessly in their new language, both orally and in writing. Although high expectations are important, ELLs need a transition period once immersed in a new language. Hutchinson et al. (2003) believes it takes two years for non-native speakers to develop social communication skills, and five to seven years to develop academic language proficiency that is comparable to peers. Further, many untrained ELL teachers did not provide students with rich and stimulating literature. The
literature used in the classroom was not an instructional match to the students, who lacked the necessary reading skills and prior knowledge. They would have greatly benefited from a systematic, guided curriculum that was meaningful and interesting.

The 26 teachers that Gersten (2002) studied by observing their literacy instruction were not bad teachers. Rather, they were unequipped or unknowledgeable ELL teachers. Teachers were frustrated because they wanted ELLs to succeed, but they did not know how to help them succeed. Teachers can become better ELL teachers when they question all preconceived ideas about ELLs and learn about their home culture (Alanis, 2004). This frustration and lack of background information between teachers and students caused an extreme distance and lack of understanding between students and teachers. Communication between both parties became forced in nature, which made learning minimal and created a larger achievement gap between native speakers and ELLs (Gersten, 2002).

**Achievement Gap Between Native Speakers and ELLs**

Although ELLs and native speakers similarly develop phonological awareness and beginning reading skills (Gersten & Geva, 2003), there is a wide achievement gap between the two groups' reading abilities (Alanis, 2004). In a three-year longitudinal study assessing 86 second, third, and fourth grade students' reading accuracy and comprehension, Hutchinson et al. (2003) found that ELLs and native speakers' reading accuracy was often similar. However, ELLs had significantly poorer reading and listening comprehension skills. It may appear to a teacher that an ELL has good reading skills, but reading accuracy at the decoding level and reading comprehension do not
develop simultaneously. It is crucial for teachers of ELLs to understand that when an ELL is reading with accuracy, he or she may not be comprehending.

It is a demanding task for ELLs to learn both language and content at the same time (Gersten, 2002). English native speakers have often several years advantage over ELL students because of their prior language experiences, resulting in a significant vocabulary gap between them (Hutchinson et al., 2003). ELL students' limited vocabulary skills may then contribute to poorer reading comprehension and beginning and ongoing reading skills (Hutchinson et al., 2003). Since much of learning other content is based upon reading comprehension, the vocabulary of ELLs not only influences their reading skills, but ultimately their academic progress (Alanis, 2004).

The achievement gap is widened further in a classroom environment not conducive to language learning. Often teachers will use simplified gestures and verbal interactions that would seem to help students' understanding, but these simple communications may set students farther behind if they are not combined with content that challenges the students. ELLs in higher grades are often unprepared for the high school workload and have difficulty understanding abstract ideas (Hutchinson et al., 2003). Instructional methods and strategies that involve little risk may teach ELLs to take few risks in learning, and this could result in lower academic achievement. Consequently, the gap widens.

**Primary Language and English Language Exposure**

Some students come to school without any English exposure or communication skills, but they are proficient in their primary language. Gertsen and Geva (2003)
observed 34 first grade classrooms for two years. At least three-fourths of the students in these classes were ELLs. They found that phonological awareness in a student's primary language was correlated to phonological awareness in English. The researchers suggested that explicit instructional strategies that show connections between languages may contribute to reading growth of ELLs. According to Alanis (2004), after four to seven years, academic achievement is greatest among bilingual schooled students compared to monolingual schooled students. Gains are most frequent when teachers utilize the student's primary language. When a student's primary language can be used along with English, the student sees language connections while learning content. Consequently, the transition to English language proficiency is smoother and the achievement gap closes. It is important to note that primary languages should be used separately from English, so students will be able to make language connections without confusion (Ulanoff & Pucci, 1999). For example, teachers should not intermingle languages during a task.

Students who do not have books read to them in any language prior to starting school must explicitly be taught reading behaviors. Reading behaviors include attentiveness to the story, sitting still, and forming questions within one's mind. Students without these prior reading experiences often find teachers' questioning during reading perplexing. For example, a student may think, "Why can't my teacher remember that? She just read the answer." Teaching reading behaviors often takes place in kindergarten or first grade, or when a child first enters school (Meier, 2003).

Native English speakers commonly have an advantage in school over ELLs because of their prior experiences with English. Early English experiences foster reading
comprehension and facilitate phonemic awareness, two of the five elements of reading (Hutchinson et al., 2003). Chang (1994) surveyed 104 parents in Singapore on language usage and language materials that were provided to their children. Vocabulary, listening comprehension, story comprehension, translation, and verbal fluency assessments were given to students in both English and Chinese languages in a bilingual preschool and a primary school. Exposure to English significantly increased English language acquisition. Knowing that exposure to a language increases language acquisition, many parents of ELLs buy supplementary English books and materials for extra practice at home. In Chang's study, the language spoken during a read-aloud significantly impacted language acquisition, rather than the language of the supplementary materials. When adults read and discuss stories with ELLs, the students hear more formal and richer vocabulary than in an English conversation (Alanis, 2004). This is especially true in teacher read-alouds because rich vocabulary is used more often in teacher read-alouds than shared or guided reading methods (Militante, 2006). The amount of language spoken to a child is a factor in language development. Therefore, reading aloud fosters literacy (Vivas, 1996).

Reading Aloud to ELLs

Objective of Reading Aloud

There are two main goals of reading aloud to ELLs. One goal is to create independent readers (Kimbell-Lopez, 2003). Another goal is to enhance interactive activities between adults and ELLs, simulating questions and encouraging conversation (Vivas, 1996). ELLs receive immediate and visual access to vocabulary and exposure to English when someone is reading aloud to them. "A book becomes a lens through which
to examine the world, a tool for thinking about and solving problems in children’s everyday lives” (Meier, 2003, p. 244). Reading aloud models language patterns to ELLs, and the learners can then imitate sounds and sentence structures (Vivas, 1996). Follow-up writing activities allow students to practice using language structure (Athaide-Shannon, 2005).

When teachers read aloud, ELLs begin to distinguish between print and speech and understand that both print and speech have meaning (Kimbell-Lopez, 2003). Additionally, the relationship between oral and written language becomes more clear (Brabhan & Lynch-Brown, 2002). Speaker et al. (2004) assessed the qualitative changes in verbal fluency (vocabulary, grammar, length of utterance and sentence formation) in five three-, four-, and five-year old students who were enrolled in a vigorous read aloud program for students with diverse language skills. When all participants made significant gains in their mean length of utterance after 40 books were read aloud to them, the researchers concluded that ELLs’ language development can be fostered and the relationship between oral and written language is more apparent by reading books aloud.

Benefits of reading aloud

When ELLs are learning to read, their decoding and fluency skills in English are usually underdeveloped. ELLs are able to focus on greater semantic units when they are read to because they do not have to focus on fluently decoding one word at a time. Rather, they can focus on comprehending the story’s meaning (Amer, 1997). ELLs greatly benefit from books read aloud, especially in a teacher read-aloud setting, because they hear new vocabulary, sentences, ideas, and text structures (Alanis, 2004). Native
English speakers will not learn as much rich vocabulary from shared or guided reading since they will know many of the words already. They will learn vocabulary from teacher read-alouds because of the exposure to rich vocabulary that may not be read independently by native speakers or ELLs (Militante, 2006). Reading aloud models language patterns so ELLs can imitate sound and sentence structures which increase their vocabulary (Vivas, 1996).

Vivas (1996) stated that preschool and first grade students in general significantly increase language comprehension and expression after being exposed to stories read aloud at school or at home. Children who hear a variety of stories read aloud may develop more vocabulary and syntactic complexity in their language skills, listening skills, and abilities to organize narrative thoughts. All of these skills or abilities increase early literacy development (Speaker et al., 2004).

There are also content and cultural benefits to reading aloud to ELLs. When ELLs of all ages are read to, they often develop a pleasure for reading and this may lead to enjoyment across different content areas (Elley, 1991). ELLs also benefit from stories read aloud because they gain cultural norm awareness. These students implicitly learn about friendships, rules, gender roles, and relationships specific to the majority culture when others read aloud to them (Meier, 2003).

Resistant readers, readers who dislike reading or are not intrinsically motivated to read, especially benefit from having stories read aloud to them by shared reading, guided reading, or by teacher read-alouds. Sometimes ELLs are resistant readers. They gain a greater vocabulary development and a deeper pleasure for reading through reading aloud.
than through reading silently (Elley, 1997). ELLs or resistant readers learn best and become proficient sooner when they feel confident and secure in their reading abilities (Arnold & Colburn, 2005). Dreher (2003) believes that struggling or resistant readers need access to informational, or nonfiction, texts. When a teacher reads information books aloud, the likelihood of the student reading the same type of books increases. These books can be motivating because they tap into the student's interests, and students can begin "knowledge seeking."

**Steps to English Proficiency**

Exposure to English and hearing stories read aloud significantly increase English language acquisition (Chang, 1994); however, knowledge about and the understanding of words is one of the most critical pieces of early reading achievement and comprehension. If students are using texts that they cannot understand because of lack of useful prior experiences, their vocabulary understanding will be limited. This affects ELLs' comprehension and language proficiency (Hutchinson et al., 2003). In a three-year study of ELLs in grades three through six, Gersten (2002) found that ELLs need a balanced literature-based curriculum with explicit instruction to develop language proficiency.

Teachers must teach ELLs strategies that good readers practice and model how to make meaning with the text because ELLs are often unfamiliar with English and lack relevant prior experiences (Kimbell-Lopez, 2003). When the reader and the listeners are making meaning with the words, ELLs learn to internally predict and make inferences. Comprehension and expression develop more fluently when stories are read aloud at school or at home. This all leads to a smooth English proficiency transition (Vivas,
Rereading stories aloud provides a deep understanding of vocabulary, story sequence, and reinforced learning. One study hypothesizes that students need to hear a word 14 times before it becomes part of their vocabulary (Arnold & Colburn, 2005). In addition to vocabulary, language patterns are reinforced, and students become more fluent from repeated readings (Speaker et al., 2004).

**Effectively Reading Aloud to ELLs**

**Establishing Prior Knowledge**

For children to comprehend what they read and gain English proficiency, they need prior knowledge of the topic they are reading about. If ELLs do not have background knowledge about a certain topic, teachers should use prereading skills, preview and review books, or predictable literature to build background knowledge (Ulanoff & Pucci, 1999). After knowledge about the topic is developed, effective methods of reading aloud link instructional strategies to ELLs' reading growth (Gersten & Geva, 2003).

**Components of Instruction and Learning**

Gersten (2002) believes the long-term goal of teaching ELLs is achieving English proficiency and fluency. In beginning stages of language learning, ELLs must transfer knowledge from their native language to English. This becomes easier as they become more proficient with English because they are practicing strategies and methods they have learned. Reading aloud to ELLs should include the teaching and modeling of explicit strategies and allowing students to use free expression. Elley (1991) outlined several empirical studies, and then created five components that are essential to
appropriate instruction and language learning. ELLs need to “(1) be immersed in meaningful and appealing text, (2) build upon incidental language learning from the context of the book, (3) experience integration of oral (text) and written language (follow-up activities), (4) focus on meaning and content, rather than form and structure, and (5) possess high intrinsic motivation” (pp. 378-379).

Methods of Reading Aloud

The effectiveness of reading aloud is based on how the teacher reads to the students. A teacher can read in three different styles: interactional, performance, and simply reading out loud. An interactional style teacher reads aloud and discusses the story throughout the book. A performance style teacher encourages discussion before and after reading, but reads the book without discussion during reading. Teachers who read out loud without any discussion just read to the students (Brabham & Lynch-Brown, 2002).

According to Brabham & Lynch-Brown’s (2002) study that assessed the effects of vocabulary acquisition and comprehension of 117 first grade students and 129 third grade students, students’ mean vocabulary and comprehension scores increased when the teacher read aloud. It increased the most with an interactional style teacher and the least with the just reading style teacher. Vocabulary learning is greatest when the following takes place: stories are read and key words are defined, words appear more than once in a story or illustration, and the book is interesting, meaningful, and comprehensible to the students. Since students need to learn 3,000 words each year in the elementary grades, it is crucial for teachers to effectively read aloud (Elley, 1997).
Active Participation

Active participation in storytelling encourages fluency of verbal expression (Speaker et al., 2004). Students will make connections from oral to written languages when teachers read aloud using shared reading, guided reading, or teacher read-alouds on a daily basis and discuss the story afterwards (Alanis, 2004). If a child becomes actively involved in the literacy experience by predicting, retelling, or asking questions, these experiences are more beneficial than simply reading aloud daily (Arnold & Colburn, 2005). Teachers need to model predicting, retelling, and asking questions so students can learn how to become actively involved. Active involvement needs to be reinforced in later reading and writing activities to capitalize on the full benefits of reading aloud (Speaker et al., 2004).

Active participation by students while the teacher is reading aloud is often called an interactive read aloud. Using interactive read alouds is an especially good strategy to use with beginning readers or ELLs because it allows the students to make meaning of the text and to have supportive social interactions with the teacher. The choice of the book is a crucial component of interactive read alouds. The reader as well as the students must find the book interesting for it to be an effective tool for literacy (Kimbell-Lopez, 2003).

Follow-up Activities

Exposure to reading aloud with connected discussion and a follow-up activity, such as a graphic organizer, is a more effective reading method than exposure to reading aloud alone (Elley, 1991). Students who have well developed English language skills as
well as those with limited English skills benefit from being read aloud to and participating in discussions. This provides structured scaffolding for the ELLs, and repeated exposure to books and scaffold strategies increases academic learning as well (Ulanoff & Pucci, 1999). The results of reading aloud with follow-up activities include improvements for ELLs in the following areas: reading comprehension, English structures, word recognition, oral language, and positive attitudes towards reading (Elley, 1991).

**Teachers' Roles**

Teachers play an important role as mediators to convey the meaning of words through strategies and techniques (Ulanoff & Pucci, 1999). The teacher acts as a mediator when he or she teaches ELLs strategies to solve unfamiliar words during the read-aloud. This has been found to be a more sound technique than interrupting the ELL later when he or she is reading, leading to better comprehension and improved reading fluency (Athaide-Shannon, 2005). When teaching vocabulary from a book, teachers need to focus on two or three critical words for a few days, instead of drill lists that cover numerous words. By introducing a few important words at a time, students will be able to learn words at a manageable pace (Elley, 1991).

**Role of Parents**

Vivas's (1996) research suggests that preschool and first grade students have significantly greater language comprehension and expression after being exposed to stories read aloud at school and at home. Both teachers and parents play an important role in helping ELLs develop text comprehension and vocabulary, and ultimately English
proficiency. Since many parents of ELLs may be ELLs themselves, parents can play an active part by reading wordless books, or books without words, with their children. This allows parents and students to use either English or their primary language to construct meaning for texts (Alanis, 2004). According to Gertsen and Geva (2003), phonological awareness in a student’s primary language is beneficial because it directly correlates to phonological awareness in English. When a student’s primary language can be used along with English, the student will see language connections, and the transition to English language proficiency will be smoother. Parental attitudes and prejudices about language learning can transfer to their children. These prejudices and feelings can influence the ELLs’s motivation and English proficiency (Chang, 1994).

Reading Aloud Nonfiction Texts

According to Duke, Bennetti-Armistead, and Roberts (2003) informational texts are not used on a consistent basis in elementary classrooms. Informational, or nonfiction books, use compare/contrast, problem/solution, or other text structures in their text. Narratives, or fictional books, are comprised of a setting, characters, and a plot. Yopp and Yopp (2000) conducted an informal survey of 126 elementary teachers and found that nonfiction books may make up only a small part of read-alouds texts in elementary classrooms. Only 14% of the books that teachers read aloud were informational. As students progress through school, they gain the ability to competently read informational texts.

Some adults feel that young children cannot handle informational text, they are not interested in informational texts, or they should first learn to read and then read to
learn (Duke et al., 2003). However, Yopp and Yopp (2000) and Duke et al. suggest that young children are capable of interacting with informational and nonfiction texts. Children grow in their ability to comprehend informational text with increasing opportunities to hear nonfiction literature. The opportunity to hear nonfiction also helps build relevant background knowledge at an early age (Olyer & Barry, 1996).

Yopp and Yopp (2000) also believe that if young students are not offered experiences to read aloud to with informational texts, they will have future difficulties comprehending these informational materials. Children are curious, and they can learn about their world from these nonfiction texts. Informational texts may build on children's interests, and this type of literature may encourage them to read for purpose and enjoyment (Yopp & Yopp, 2000). Dreher (2003) believes that struggling or resistant readers need access to informational, or nonfiction, texts. When a teacher reads information books aloud, the likelihood of the student reading the same type of books increases. These books can be motivating because they tap into the student’s interests, and students can begin “knowledge seeking.”

Doiron (1994) believes that students are not receiving a balanced literacy experience when they are being read to with just fictional literature. Fiction texts dominate in the elementary classroom, but using both fictional and nonfictional texts can (1) allow the teacher to design more integrated literature units, (2) build upon students’ literacy strengths when the teacher is presenting information, and (3) present information in a fun manner (Doiron, 1994).
Silent Reading vs. Reading Aloud

Silent reading is a favorite technique in classrooms where teachers are trying to promote independent reading and proficient readers (Kimbell-Lopez, 2003). Although there is much value to reading silently, teachers must be cautious when using this technique with ELLs. Resistant readers or beginning readers, which can be ELLs, may be resistant towards reading silently or aloud because of their lack of reading strategies, relevant prior experiences, and vocabulary development. ELLs greatly benefit from having stories read to them because they begin to develop an enjoyment of reading (Elley, 1997) are may not be struggling to read every word. Dhaif (1990) suggests that when teachers of ELLs read aloud, the level of students' comprehension is significantly higher than when students read silently. ELLs who have stories read to them score higher on multiple choice and story frame tests of comprehension than ELLs who read the same text silently. When ELLs are listening to a story they are able to focus on semantic units rather than words individually (Amer, 1997). Also, nonproficient ELLs may learn more vocabulary when listening to stories and discussion than when reading by themselves (Brabham & Lynch-Brown, 2002).

Cautions about Reading Aloud

Although reading aloud increases vocabulary knowledge, comprehension, and reading skills, simply reading out loud to students will not significantly increase their vocabulary and reading comprehension. Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002) discovered that 74% of elementary teachers read aloud on a daily basis, but teachers who are not
implementing literacy connections, discussion, or instruction are not using literature to its fullest potential.

Another caution about reading aloud connects the use of fiction books, rather than a basal textbook or nonfiction material, as instructional materials. Books used as academic read alouds usually are fiction and have facts presented within the narrative. Brabham, Boyd, and Edgington (2000) studied 29 second grade students, 39 third grade students, and 71 fourth grade students who were read to using similar fiction and nonfiction books. The younger students, mostly second grade students, learned vocabulary and understood the main themes of these books, but they were unable to distinguish real life from fantasy. If teachers use fictional materials for instruction, they should explain differences between real life and fantasy.

Conclusion

Language proficiency and literary skills are fostered when teachers or parents effectively read aloud to ELLs. Reading achievement gaps exist between native English speakers and ELLs (Ulanoff & Pucci, 1999). The number of ELLs in the United States is increasing (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002), and teachers with no prior training and little background knowledge about ELLs are becoming ELL teachers by default (Gersten, 2002). Schools and educators are influenced on a daily basis by the differing language skills and prior experiences of students in the United States.

This study is important to the field of ELL and reading for several reasons. First, teachers are becoming ELL teachers by default, and they may feel uncertain because of the responsibility to teach both language and content (Gersten, 2002). Second, an
achievement gap exists between ELLs and native speakers, especially in the content area of reading (Alanis, 2004). Third, ELLs greatly benefit from having books read aloud in shared reading, guided reading, or through teacher read-alouds because they hear new vocabulary, sentences, ideas, and text structures (Alanis, 2004). Reading aloud models language patterns, so ELLs can imitate sound and sentence structures which increase their vocabulary (Vivas, 1996). Yet, the vocabulary and fluency gains between ELLs and native speakers after utilizing guided reading and teacher read-alouds are uncertain. This study further explored these important issues.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This case study examined ELLs’ and native speakers’ educational backgrounds and language learning while guided reading and teacher read-alouds were collectively implemented in the classroom. This study sought to answer three questions: (1) What absolute growth in reading accuracy and decoding, fluency, comprehension, phonological processing, phonemic correspondence, vocabulary, and correctly used language structures is seen in this group of ELLs when their teacher is using guided reading and teacher read-alouds? (2) How does growth in reading accuracy and decoding, fluency, comprehension, phonological processing, phonemic correspondence, vocabulary, and correctly used language structures differ between these ELLs and native speakers when their teacher is using guided reading and teacher read-alouds? (3) What methods, materials, and communication does this teacher use while reading aloud to ELLs and native speakers?

This study examined a first grade classroom where the teacher used guided reading and teacher read-alouds on a daily basis. The classroom was comprised of seven ELLs and 10 native English speakers. Five native speakers and five ELLs were randomly selected by the teacher and researcher from a class list. The classroom teacher was interviewed and surveyed to gather information about participants’ reading development, language skills, vocabulary, and language fluency. The teacher also provided information about current methods, materials, and communication used when
reading aloud to ELLs and native speakers. Parents were given a home language survey about their own and their child's language background. Finally, kindergarten teachers of the participants were surveyed about the participants' reading development, language skills, vocabulary, and language fluency.

Observations took place approximately twice a week for 12 weeks in the winter. The researcher observed approximately two guided reading group lessons and one teacher-read aloud session each week. A focused observation check-list was used to guide the note-taking about the guided reading and teacher read-alouds, the instructional techniques, and the teacher's communication with students during these read-alouds. In addition to using the checklist as a guide, rich field notes were taken that described instructional methods, teacher communication, instructional strategies, classroom environment, and student-teacher interactions.

The ten participants were given pre-, mid-, and post-assessments consisting of fluency and vocabulary measures by the classroom teacher and researcher. The fluency measures were the Development Reading Assessment (DRA) and the Diagnostic-Phonological Awareness Test (D-PAT). Vocabulary was measured through a language experience assessment tool. The researcher used the language experience story as a pre- and post-assessment, comparing participants' use of vocabulary, correct language structures, and incorrect language structures. The data were used to create a case study that includes a rich description of the participants' language background, absolute reading and language growth made by ELLs, differences in reading accuracy and decoding, fluency, comprehension, phonological processing, phonemic correspondence,
vocabulary, and correctly used language structures between ELLs and native English speakers, and methods, materials, and communication that took place during guided reading and teacher read-alouds.

Participants

Participants in this case study were five native English speakers and five ELLs from the same elementary school, Kat Elementary, in a Midwestern community of approximately 68,000 people. The participants were in the same first grade classroom with the same teacher. The five ELLs were chosen randomly from the seven ELLs in the classroom. To control for reading level, each native speaker was randomly selected from a corresponding ELL's reading group so their reading abilities were similar. The five ELLs were: Alen, Bada, Cadil, Drazen, and Emir and the five native English speakers were: Allison, Betsey, Chris, Dustin, and Eric. All participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity.

A home-language survey was distributed to parents or guardians of each student. All five native English speakers and their parents or guardians learned English as their first language. Only English was spoken in the homes of the native English speakers. Betsey's family noted that she understands a little Spanish, and she was influenced by another language from her great-grandmother. All of the native English speakers were born in the state in which the research took place, and four of the five specified that they were born in city that the research took place. Chris attended another elementary school in the same city in which the research took place before attending his current elementary school. Betsey's family noted that she attended Head Start.
Of the five ELLs, Drazen, Emir, and Bada learned Bosnian as their first language. Their parents or guardians also learned Bosnian as their first language. Cadil and his parents or guardians learned Marshallese, a language of the Marshall Islands near Guam, as their first language. Alen, along with his parents or guardians, learned Urdu as their first language. According to Cadil’s parents or guardians, both Cadil and they speak Marshallese most often at home. Drazen’s parents or guardians said that Drazen speaks English and Bosnian at home, while they most often speak Bosnian. The parents of Alen said that they both speak Urdu and English most often at home. In Emir’s home, he most often speaks Bosnian and English, while his parents or guardians speak mostly Bosnian. Bada most often speaks English at home, while her parents or guardians speak Bosnian and English. All parents or guardians said that the language they use in the home is the same language they use to talk with their children.

Some of the ELLs have been influenced by another language than English from grandparents and other family members. Four out of the five ELLs were born in the USA. Alen was born in Pakistan, and he moved to the U.S. in 2003. Cadil was born in Oklahoma, and moved to the city in which the research took place in 2004. Drazen and Bada were born in the city in which the research took place. Cadil and Drazen attended other elementary schools in the same city before attending their current elementary school. Table 1 provides a summary of students’ language experiences.

A reading coach from the district where the research was conducted was asked to recommend an exemplary first grade classroom in which the teacher used guided reading and teacher read-alouds on a daily or consistent basis. Approximately seven
first-grade teachers were recommended, and Mrs. Penn was the first teacher meeting the required credentials to volunteer after an explanatory e-mail was sent out to the recommended teachers. Mrs. Penn received a B.A. in elementary education in 1983 and received an M.A. in educational psychology in 2005. She has taught for 13 years and was a substitute for a year and a half before teaching full-time. All of her teaching has been in her current district. She has taught at this school for two years and was at a different elementary school in the district for eight years before this. Prior to teaching in elementary schools, she taught at one of the district’s middle school for three years.

**Setting**

The school district in which the research was conducted is the fifth largest school district of the Midwestern state’s 377 public school systems with an enrollment of approximately 10,500 students. The district has approximately 820 full-time equivalent (FTE) professional employees, including administrators and teachers, and 510 FTE support staff. Approximately 40% of the teaching staff has an advanced degree. There are approximately 490 students K-5 in the school. There are approximately 14:1 pupils to teachers in the school, compared to the state average of 17:1. The average first grade classroom size for the district is 19.2, whereas the school is 20.3.

The classroom was comprised of 7 ELLs and 10 native English speakers for a total of 17 students. The four largest ethnicities that make up the school are: White 76%, African American 11%, Hispanic 8%, and Asian 3%. The four largest ethnicities that make up the district are: White 64%, African American 28%, Hispanic 6%, and Asian 1%. The mission of the school “is to provide a solid foundation for lifelong learning
which encourages the maximum academic, social, emotional, physical and aesthetic growth of each child.”

The percentage of students in the school who were considered to be proficient readers, or above the 40th percentile in reading, ranged from 58.7% to 61.7% over the past four years. The district average of proficient readers was 61.4%, and the national average was 60%. Based on the previous year’s performance and noted on the state’s report card, this particular district is considered in need of assistance for the 2006-2007 school year in reading and math. The following educational programs were offered to all students: Reading Renaissance, Read A Million Minutes/Book It Reading, Sound Awareness Program in Kindergarten for reading readiness, Engaged Learning Technology Center, Take Charge of Your Body Smart Moves, Junior Achievement, Olympic Kids Program, Garden/Prairie Integrated Curricular Projects (Butterfly Garden), and Say No to Drugs-program/Fire Pals. The school’s free and reduced lunch eligibility was 46.2%, compared to the district average of 61.6%. Mobility of the students in the school is 10.4%, compared to the district average of 21.7%. The attendance rate for the school is 95.9%, and the district average is 95.4%.

Reading and Reading Aloud Methods

One of the district’s reading coaches, the first-grade teacher Mrs. Penn, and the kindergarten teachers that the student participants had the previous year were surveyed about reading methods and instruction in the classroom. According to the reading coach, the district recommended a reading framework that includes: teacher read-alouds, large group reading instruction, small-group reading instruction, self-selected reading, reading
and writing across the curriculum, and working with words and writing. Mrs. Penn said that she taught reading using small group reading instruction using the guided reading steps. She taught large group reading to the whole class where they learn more about writing and reading comprehension strategies and phonemic awareness. Read-aloud time took place after lunch. The kindergarten teachers that had the student participants in kindergarten also described their reading methods. They used methods that were recommended by their district and reading coaches including: teacher read-aloud, large group reading instruction, small-group reading instruction, one-on-one instruction as needed, self-selected reading, center exploration, shared reading and writing, interactive writing, and modeled writing.

The reading coach addressed educational issues that were pertinent to ELLs. This district recommended that classroom teachers use the same books and materials with ELLs that they use for native speakers, such as big books, trade books, fiction, non-fiction, newspapers, and book sets. Mrs. Penn said she used the same materials for all students. For guided reading she used leveled books that the students could keep in their desks for a few weeks. She received the books from the school book room or the Title I office. For the read-alouds, she used a variety of books either from the classroom, public library, or school library. The kindergarten teachers said they used the same materials for all students as well. However, ELLs worked with the ELL teacher for 60 minutes twice a week. The teachers may pull ELL students and work on vocabulary and letter sounds depending on the responses received during large group instruction. They used
homemade materials as well as commercially made products to teach alphabet recognition, rhyming, and numerical recognition.

The reading coach emphasized that when reading aloud teachers may hold discussions that include application of reading objectives. Teachers may also make use of think-alouds to model metacognition of comprehension strategies. Mrs. Penn said that when she read aloud, she asked questions that focused students on the meaning of the story. She also picked out many of the words for vocabulary understanding and asked what other words the author could have used that means the same thing. Sometimes her class talked about why the author might have chosen that word. If a student did not understand a question, she would restate it. If a student seemed to not be able to tell the teacher an answer, but the teacher thought that the student did know, she would offer the student two choices. According to Mrs. Penn, the problem of not knowing a word was a more common problem with the ELL students: “I can see that they understand it, but cannot find the words to tell it. If given a choice, they can articulate their answer.” She also would restate a student’s answer either to make it clearer, to correct word usage, or to model the correct way of saying something.

The kindergarten teachers said they talked and communicated with ELLs and native English speakers in the same manner. They used materials with good illustrations and tried to use expression when reading aloud making use of body language, gestures, or actions to explain certain vocabulary. Although they did not use an interpreter in the classroom, important notes for parents were interpreted. Interpreters were provided at conferences if requested.
Procedure

Selection of participants

One of the district’s reading coaches recommended approximately seven exemplary first grade classrooms where classroom teachers used guided and teacher read-alouds on a daily basis. The researcher sent a personal e-mail to each of the teachers explaining the study and asking if they would be willing to participate. It was specified in the e-mail that the teacher needed to be using guided and teacher read-alouds on a daily basis and ideally have at least five ELLs and five native English speakers in the classroom. Mrs. Penn was the first teacher who responded that met all of the requirements and wanted to participate in the study.

The five ELLs along with two alternates were chosen randomly from all the ELLs in the classroom. It was important that reading ability be controlled for the ELLs and native English speakers, therefore each native speaker was randomly selected from a corresponding ELL’s reading group so their reading levels were similar. A consent form for the parents or guardians that described the study was sent home with the students inviting both the students and parents to participate. According to the classroom teacher, none of the families needed to have the consent forms translated into their native language. A copy of the home language survey is included in appendix A.

Observations

Observations took place approximately twice a week during the 12-week study. The researcher observed approximately two guided reading group lessons on one day during the week and one teacher-read aloud session another day that week. The field
notes were systemically collected on a laptop word processor during the guided reading lessons or during the teacher read-aloud. A focused observation check-list was used to guide the note-taking about the guided reading and teacher read-alouds, the instructional techniques, and the teacher’s communication with students during these read-alouds. A copy of the observation check-list is included in appendix B.

Teacher Questionnaires

The reading coach was given an open-ended questionnaire which provided a background understanding of what is typical and effective reading instruction at the first grade level in the district. The classroom teacher, Mrs. Penn, completed an open-ended questionnaire about participants’ reading development, language skills, vocabulary, and language fluency. Mrs. Penn also provided information about current methods, materials, and communication used when reading aloud to ELLs and native English speakers. The three kindergarten teachers of the participants were contacted, and two teachers were willing to complete a questionnaire about the participants’ reading development, language skills, vocabulary, and language fluency. They also provided information about the instructional methods, curriculum materials, and communication techniques used when reading aloud to ELLs and native English speakers. All questionnaires were mailed to participants and included a self-addressed stamped envelope to return the questionnaire. Mrs. Penn was personally given her questionnaire, and she personally returned it to the researcher. A copy of the teacher questionnaire is included in appendix C.
Home Language Survey

Parents or guardians of the participants were given a home language survey about their and their child’s language background. According to the classroom teacher, none of the families needed to have the consent forms translated into their native language. A self-addressed stamped envelope was provided so the parents could return the home-language survey by mail to the researcher or directly to the classroom teacher.

DRA

The DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) is an individually administered test that assesses reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. The test helps educators identify student’s reading ability and level, document progress, and tailor teaching to drive more effective reading instruction. The district requires classroom teachers to collect DRA scores for students throughout the year. Mrs. Penn individually administered the DRA to her students. She gathered reading level data from the DRA three times during the beginning, middle, and end of the study.

D-PAT

The D-PAT (Diagnostic Phonological Awareness Test) is an individually administered test designed to identify deficits in phonological processing and phoneme-grapheme correspondence. The D-PAT was administered by the researcher three times during the beginning, middle, and end of the study. Five different sections with 10 questions in each section were evaluated including: rhyming words, segmenting syllables, isolation of initial sounds, deletion of compounds, and blending of syllables.
Language Experience

All participating students were given the opportunity to participate in two language experiences and tell a story twice at the beginning and end of the study. The topic was determined upon the child's interests with the teacher’s suggestions of topics for each student. The children had different topics, but they all had the same topic for the two language experience evaluations. The stories were examined by the researcher and evaluated using Mary Cappellini’s (2006) writing assessment that examines language patterns used at each developmental level of English language proficiency. After individually assessing the language structures used correctly and the language structures used incorrectly, each student was given a language development level at the beginning and end of the study. There are a total of five levels: beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, and advanced. These levels are based on California ELD standards and on the Idea Placement Test (IPT), used for assessment upon entrance to school and for exit from English language development programs.

Trustworthiness of Data

The following steps were taken to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of data gathered in this study (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005). First, 12-weeks of data were collected. The prolonged study examined different groupings of students approximately twice a week from November through February helping ensure that the data reflected typical classroom methods, climate, and performance, rather than one-time, chance data. Second, the use of multiple pieces of data, such as multiple observations of guided reading and teacher read-alouds, different
test scores collected throughout the study, surveys completed by parents, teachers, a
district reading coach, and past teachers resulted in data triangulation and provided
opportunities for looking at the data that was consistent or inconsistent with research
themes. Third, frequent member checks were conducted during the study. These
member checks allowed clarification of teachers’ teaching and methods, ensuring the
accuracy of its representation. Finally, peer debriefers, two professors and a peer, also
contributed to credibility of this research. Each party involved collaboratively discussed
the research, and they gave feedback about the study’s methods, interpretations, and
hypotheses.

Data Analysis

The steps suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were used to guide the data
analysis. A focused observation check-list was used to guide the note-taking about the
guided reading and teacher read-alouds, the instructional techniques, and the teacher’s
communication with students during these read-alouds. In addition to using the checklist
as a guide, rich field notes were taken that were descriptive of the methods,
communication, strategies, environment, and interactions. These notes were peer
debriefed and evaluated by a professor who gave critical feedback. When all of the data
was collected, the field notes were examined, and the researcher identified “units” within
the questionnaires and observations. These units were read and re-read, and through
comparisons of each unit with other units, categories of common large themes, or codes,
were created. Under these large themes, smaller units and descriptions of the codes were
identified. The field notes and the smaller units listed under the codes, were read and re-
read to make sure there wasn’t misinterpretation. All small units listed under the codes came directly from the observations or questionnaires. Analysis procedures that met Brantlinger et al.’s (2005) quality standards for qualitative data analysis include: appropriate selected participants, systematically collected field notes, that the research had minimal effect on students’ and teacher’s normal routine, a sufficient rationale for the data reported, and documentation of methods to establish trustworthiness and credibility.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

The number of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the United States continues to increase (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002); therefore, many schools and educators will likely be affected by the growing differences in students' language skills and prior experiences. Teachers with no training and little ELL background knowledge are becoming ELL teachers by default (Gersten, 2002). The amount of English exposure that a student receives affects language proficiency, resulting in achievement gaps between native English speakers and ELLs. However, there are literacy and language benefits of reading aloud to ELLs. Language proficiency, comprehension, and vocabulary are fostered when adults effectively read aloud to ELLs (Ulanoff & Pucci, 1999).

This research addresses the need for understanding ELLs and how ELLs benefit from adults effectively reading aloud to them. Further research is needed on effective reading instruction for ELLs for several reasons. First, teachers are becoming ELL teachers by default and feel overwhelmed because of the responsibility to teach both language and content (Gersten, 2002). Second, an achievement gap exists between ELLs and native speakers, especially in the content area of reading (Alanis, 2004). Third, ELLs greatly benefit from having books read aloud because they hear new vocabulary, sentences, ideas, and text structures (Alanis, 2004), especially during teacher read-alouds. Reading aloud models language patterns, so ELLs can imitate sound and sentence structures which increase their vocabulary (Vivas, 1996). Yet, the vocabulary and fluency gains between ELLs and native speakers after utilizing guided reading and teacher read-
alouds are uncertain. The goal of this study was to read aloud to students using guided reading and teacher read-alouds, then compare growth of reading accuracy and decoding, fluency, comprehension, phonological processing, phonemic correspondence, vocabulary, and correctly used language structures between the ELLs and native speakers while considering prior experiences and instruction.

Specifically, this research answered the following questions: (1) What absolute growth in reading accuracy and decoding, fluency, comprehension, phonological processing, phonemic correspondence, vocabulary, and correctly used language structures is seen in this group of ELLs when their teacher is using guided reading and teacher read-alouds? (2) How does growth in reading accuracy and decoding, fluency, comprehension, phonological processing, phonemic correspondence, vocabulary, and correctly used language structures differ between these ELLs and native speakers when their teacher is using guided reading and teacher read-alouds? (3) What methods, materials, and communication does the teacher use while reading aloud to ELLs and native speakers?

**DRA**

Each participating ELL student was matched to a native English speaker with a similar reading level. The classroom teacher gathered the reading level data from the DRA at the beginning, middle and end of the study. Table 2 summarizes all students' scores at each time of assessment. At the beginning of the study, DRA levels for all students ranged from 5-14. ELLs average increase in DRA level was 2.2, as compared to native speakers increase of 5.4. By the middle of the study there was a discrepancy in
DRA scores between three pairs of ELL and native speaking students: Cadil and Chris had a four level discrepancy, Drazen and Dustin eight levels, and Emir and Eric four levels.

The average increase of DRA level from the middle of the study to the end of the study was 1.6 for the ELLs and 2.4 for native English speakers. Overall, the average increase of DRA levels from the beginning of the study to the end of the study was 3.8 for the ELLs, and 7.8 for the native English speakers. At the end of the study, there was a discrepancy of two levels between Alen and Allison, four levels between Cadil and Chris, ten levels between Drazen and Dustin, and four levels between Emir and Eric.

**D-PAT**

The researcher administered the D-PAT at the beginning, middle and end of the study. Table 2 summarizes all students' scores at each time of assessment. Five different sections with 10 questions in each section were evaluated including: rhyming words, segmenting syllables, isolation of initial sounds, deletion of compounds, and blending of syllables. At the beginning of the study, D-PAT scores ranged from 36 to 49 out of 50 possible points. There was an eight point discrepancy between Alen and Allison, 13 points between Bada and Betsey, six points between Cadil and Chris, two points between Drazen and Dustin, and one point between Emir and Eric.

The average increase of D-PAT scores from the beginning to the middle of the study four ELLs was 3.8, while for native English speakers it was 0.8. There was a discrepancy of six points between Alen and Allison, four points between Bada and Betsey, six points between Cadil and Chris, six points between Drazen and Dustin, and
four points between Emir and Eric. The average increase of D-PAT scores from the middle of the study to the end of the study was 2.6 for the ELLs and 1.2 for the native English speakers. Overall, the average increase of D-PAT scores from the beginning of the study to the end of the study was 6.4 for the ELLs and 2.0 for the native English speakers. At the end of the study, there was a discrepancy of one point between Alen and Allison, five between Bada and Betsey, and one between Emir and Eric.

**Language Experience**

All students were given two language experience opportunities to tell a story at the beginning and end of the study. Table 2 summarizes all students' levels at each time of assessment. The topic was determined based on the child's interests with the teacher's suggestions of topics for each student. The children had different topics, but each child had the same topic for each of the two language experience evaluations. The researcher evaluated the stories using Mary Cappellini's (2006) writing assessment, which examines language patterns used at each developmental level of English language proficiency. After assessing the language structures used correctly and the language structures use incorrectly, each student was given a language development level. An example of the scoring process is found in figure 1. There are five developmental levels: beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, and advanced. These levels are based on California ELD standards and on the Idea Placement Test (IPT), used for assessment upon entrance to school and for exit from English language development programs.

At the beginning of the study, all students were either scoring at the early intermediate level or the intermediate level. Four ELLs scored at the early intermediate
level, and one scored at the intermediate level. Of the native English speakers, three students scored at the early intermediate level and two students scored at the intermediate level. There were discrepancies in language experience levels at the beginning of the study between Alen and Allison, Bada and Betsey, and Cadil and Chris. At the end of the study, one ELL scored at the early intermediate level, and four students scored at the intermediate level. Of the native English speakers’ two students scored at the early intermediate level, and three students scored at the intermediate level. Two ELLs stayed at their current level of early intermediate and intermediate during the entire study. One native English speaker remained at the intermediate level during the entire study, while one native English speaker moved from the intermediate to the early intermediate level.

**Guided Reading**

**Using an Effective Format of Guided Reading**

The guided reading groups were made up of four to six homogenous readers and included both ELLs and native English speakers; the group instruction took place for 20 minutes daily. The students would most often read and sometimes reread one guided reading book daily. Other times the students would only read a half of a book. The students gathered around a half-circle table with the teacher in the middle. The teacher first introduced the title of the story and then read the author and illustrator’s names. The teacher used the author and illustrator’s names throughout the story. For example, the author’s name in one story was Barbara. The teacher said, “Barbara gave you a very important word on page 5. Where do you think it is?” Next the teacher asked the students if the story was fiction or non-fiction. She defined fiction as story and non-
fiction as a book that gives information. After determining if the story was fiction or non-fiction, the teacher described unique aspects of the story and had the students locate these aspects in the book. For instance, the teacher explained what voice bubbles were and asked students to find a voice bubble in an illustration.

Next, the teacher asked students to do a picture walk, in which the teacher asked questions about the book’s pictures, while trying to elicit student responses that require students to make inferences based upon the illustration. After students completed their own picture walk, the teacher would do a picture walk aloud with students following along. If the students were reading a book that they started the previous day, the teacher led the small group in a review session instead of a picture walk. Prior to reading, the students practiced using features of the book such as the table of contents, dictionary, and index. One question that the teacher asked the students was, “On what page could I find out about bubbles?” Students then made predictions about the story, which the teacher neither reaffirmed nor disaffirmed. The teacher also did an activity having students identify what they knew, wanted to know, and learned prior to reading. Next, the teacher set the purpose of the story. On one occasion, the teacher set the purpose by saying, “I want you to find out who is there when Nelson is born.” The teacher prompted the students to “Get your finger ready.” If needed, the teacher would point her finger to where students should begin reading.

The students read one to two pages aloud independently, and then waited at the end of the page until all students were done. The number of pages that they read until they stopped depended on the ability of the group. While the students read, the teacher
observed and listened to students. She helped students with unfamiliar words or mispronunciations when appropriate. During the reading, the teacher explained how students should be independently reading aloud. She said “Read soft and make it sound like a teacher is reading. You don’t have to race. Make it sound like you’re reading to a class.” The teacher asked students to make a prediction, some that were based on illustrations, of what would happen next during reading and also asked students to provide the reasoning behind their prediction by saying, “How do you know that?” After all students were finished reading, the teacher asked about the story’s problem, solution, and also higher order thinking questions that related to the problem and solution of the story. Often the teacher would ask, “What was the main problem of the story? How did they solve their problem?” The students would also be asked about the big idea or main idea of the story and the main characters after reading the story. After reading, the teacher asked students or told students why the book had its particular title. For instance, the teacher said, “This book is called The Best Day of All. What is the best day of all?” The guided reading session was concluded after students shared their favorite part of the book.

The district reading coach described guided reading as small group reading instruction with small, flexible, homogenous groups based on student reading development and strategy use. Instruction was based on the needs of each group. Strategies and skills taught in large group were reinforced later in other content areas and in future small group reading instruction.
Mrs. Penn stated on the teacher questionnaire that her students were placed in reading groups according to their current text level. They met with her each day and had a 20 minute lesson using a book that was at their level. She said that she used the 4 step method for teaching guided reading. Oftentimes the students would finish an unread portion of a book or reread the entire story the next day. The four step method included:

1. A quick introduction to the book by the teacher.
2. The students take a picture walk, looking at each picture and making predictions about the story and get an understanding of the story.
3. The students read out loud at the same time, but not necessarily in unison. They read at their own pace. If someone is really lagging behind, it is an indication that the book is too hard for that student.
4. The students return to the text and look again at some features or words in the book. Sometimes the students will do phonics work, vocabulary work, or literary devices used by the author.

The kindergarten teachers had used methods that were recommended by the district and reading coaches including: letter recognition, concepts about print, phonemic awareness, and guided reading with students who knew some sight words and had 15 minutes of “bottom power.” With these students, the teachers used predictable books that had many cues in the illustrations. They used coaching statements to encourage independence and higher level thinking.
Tapping into Prior Experience and Predictions

While reading, the teacher made connections to books the guided reading group had previously read. During one lesson, the teacher reviewed the previous week’s book, *The Flood*, and then introduced that week’s particular book before explaining how the two books were related. She said, “This week we’ll learn what happens after the flood.” Another way that the teacher used prior experience was by relating the story to the students’ personal lives and asking students to make connections. For example, in one of the stories the main character, an elephant, had a new baby brother. The teacher asked the students about having their own baby brother or sister. If the students came upon an unfamiliar word, the teacher defined the unknown word, and then related it to personal experiences of the students or asked students to make a prediction using the new word. The teacher demonstrated this when the unfamiliar term was “delivery” and she said, “When have you had a delivery at your house?”

During the reading, the teacher made connections between the story and other academic subjects, especially if there was a spelling word in the text. At the end of the story, the teacher let students relate the story to prior experiences they had or their own prior knowledge. She also related character’s feelings to students’ feelings. One example of this was when a character from the book was opening presents on Christmas day and the teacher said, “What do you feel like when you’re ready to open presents?” After the reading, the teacher asked comprehension questions and suggested students refer back to their previous knowledge and relate it to the story. One set of questions she
asked was, “Why is that cat up there? What do you know about cats? Do you have a cat? What do they like to do?”

**Defining vocabulary**

During the guided reading lessons, students came upon words that were important but unfamiliar. The students used several strategies and methods to define these vocabulary terms. One way students learned new vocabulary was by the teacher defining a word. For example, the teacher would say, “What is a lot of water called? It’s called a flood.” The teacher then used the newly defined words in a question or in more than one sentence. In the previous example, the teacher defined the word “flood,” and later asked the question, “Did it get flooded?” The teacher also gave multiple short definitions while speaking, and said, “A contraction, two words together.” When there were complex definitions in the book, the teacher offered simpler definitions. One example of this is when the book used the phrase “a cycle of a depression and good times,” and the teacher said it was similar to a circle of bad and good times.

If a student used an unfamiliar word, the teacher requested that student define the word for the entire group. During one guided reading lesson, the teacher asked a student who had used the word “herd” to “Tell everyone what a herd is.” The teacher asked students to explain the meaning of verbs in their own words. For example, the teacher asked, “What did the animals do?” She also encouraged student to use verbs that were in story when she said, “What’s the word that Annette used to describe his horns to get them off? Yes, he butted him with his horns.” In addition to verbs, the teacher probed students to use a variety of adjectives. The teacher demonstrated this when she said, “The author
used a word to tell us about their legs. What word did she use?” If there was figurative language in the stories, the teacher explained the phrases in literal terms. When students didn’t know a word, but they used the illustrations as a strategy to figure out the definition, the teacher praised them.

Sometimes, the teacher wanted students to find where a word was defined within the text, so then all the students reread sentences in the book. To prompt students to search for a definition, the teacher said, “Where is the sentence that Barbra used to tell us about hibernating?” The whiteboard was another method the teacher used to define vocabulary. When student came upon unfamiliar vocabulary word, the teacher wrote it on the whiteboard, and then used it in a sentence. Then the students were asked what the definition was. The teacher referenced the glossary as a resource for students and described it as the little dictionary.

**Utilizing Rich Illustrations and Non-verbal Communication**

Before and during reading, the teacher asked the students to “show me” and point to a noun or a certain character in the illustration. For example, she said, “Show me the water.” “Show me Nelson. Yes, he’s standing in the middle. Who is standing next to him?” The teacher also referred students to illustrations to find answers to certain comprehension questions.” The teacher demonstrated this when she said, “What are they doing with their trunks? Look at the picture. Look at their trunks.” She praised students who used illustrations to figure out questions or definitions. While reading, the teacher encouraged students to point out a certain part of an illustration that they were reading. For instance, in one story about beetles, the teacher asked, “Where are the feelers on the
beetle?” Students were asked to compare different settings within the book using the illustrations. During one guided reading story, the teacher demonstrated by saying, “How are the pictures of the jungle and desert different?” The teacher took the time to encourage students to use their minds to make pictures while reading words and explained that pictures describe text. She said, “Yes, Gail gave us a picture for cooking. Where are people cooking on this page?” Another non-verbal communication technique that the teacher used during guided reading was using hand gestures to help describe what is happening in the story, such as imitating a duck bill with her hands.

Decoding Words and Rereading Text

While students read aloud independently in guided reading, the teacher observed and listened closely to each student. The teacher offered numerous prompts or strategies during this reading time to the entire small group or to individual students. Examples of the prompts or strategies that she offered to the students are:

“Start the sentence again.”

“Remember what the TH sounds like?” (A review of phonics)

“What does contraction mean?” (A grammar review)

“Look at this word again.”

“Look at ‘laugh’ and its ending.” (Word part examination)

“Does it make sense?”

“What part of the word do you already know?”

“Look at the picture or illustration.”

“Sound out the word.” (Word written on whiteboard)
“Think about where the characters are. Where is the setting?”

During the reading, the teacher asked the students to find a particular word defined within the text, and then they all reread the sentence. For instance, the teacher asked, “Where is the sentence that Barbra used to tell us about hibernating?” When the group came across a difficult word, the teacher sounded it out with the group, then provided more intensive help with those who were still struggling with the word. At times, a student would skip words or lines while reading, so the teacher used her pencil and pointed to the next word in the student’s book. When the teacher anticipated that a word would be unfamiliar, she wrote it on the whiteboard and explained it to the students before they read that page. When students came across a difficult word, the teacher repeated the vocabulary word more than once and used it in a sentence.

Another strategy that the teacher used was drawing a picture to illustrate a definition. For example, to define the word “middle,” she wrote the word “young” on one end of the whiteboard and the word “old” on the other end of the whiteboard. She then connected the two words with a dotted line and explained how middle is between young and old. The teacher also defined a word by relating it to another object that students were familiar with. For example, the teacher defined “beetle” by saying, “A beetle is a bug with a hard shell, but it is smaller than an ant.” After the teacher defined a word, she immediately used it in context. For instance, after providing a definition of “hibernate,” she said “Let’s read about a bug that hibernates.” When a student self-corrected himself or herself during reading, the teacher asked student about their thought process during the self-correction, saying, “How did you know it was fish and not food?”
In addition to decoding assistance, the teacher requested the students to reread words, sentences, and even books. For example, it was not uncommon for the students to reread a book during guided reading time on the same day or on a different day. When the teacher asked a comprehension question, and students were unable to provide the answer, the teacher requested students to reread a particular page. After students read the page, they were asked to reread that page and look for the sentence that told the main idea. The teacher modeled finding the main idea that gave the most important facts in the story, and then she read that sentence aloud. On other pages, the teacher asked the students to go back and reread the page while thinking about what was happening. Sometimes, at the request of the teacher, all of the students reread an important line together for extra emphasis.

Teaching Grammar

During the guided reading lessons, the teacher taught grammar strategies to the students. Often, she would use a small whiteboard to facilitate short grammar lessons during this time. One example of a short grammar lesson was when the teacher wrote the word “didn’t” on the whiteboard and then alternated covering up each part of the contraction to show how a contraction is made up of two different words. In addition to this whiteboard lesson, the teacher requested the students finger-frame compound words in the text, such as shellfish, so student could visibly see that compound words have two words in the one word. Another time the teacher used the whiteboard to explain silent letters. During one lesson, she wrote the word “right” on the whiteboard and explained the concept of the silent g.
Another way that the teacher used the whiteboard as a tool to teach grammar was when she wrote a word on the whiteboard, erased the ending and/or beginning, and asked students to figure out the definition based on the root word, which was a familiar word. For example, the teacher said, “What is the ending part that you can take off to make this word easier to read?” The teacher used this opportunity to explain what a prefix and suffix were. She also reviewed the concept of prefixes and suffixes when the word appeared again in the story or another story. For instance, the teacher explained that “s” equaled more than one when a plural word was in the text. To review, the teacher said, “What does it mean if you have an –ed at the end of the word?” Another small grammar lesson that utilized the whiteboard was when the teacher wrote a vowel pair on the whiteboard, and gradually added consonants to form a word. Students sounded out the word with each letter added until they were able to say the word altogether.

During the guided reading lesson, the teacher reviewed grammar concepts by asking a grammar question in another way. Some of these questions were: “What did you have to do to make “did not” into “didn’t?” and “How do we say “did not” as a contraction, two words together?” The teacher emphasized sound distinctions between similar words that were found in the text, such as emphasizing the “g” sound in cage and the “v” sound in cave. She also used guided reading lessons to ask why certain proper nouns, like Earth, are capitalized. Other grammar concepts, including punctuation, were reviewed when the teacher modeled how good readers drop their voice at a period and raise their voice at a question mark. Students were asked to reread the sentence if they did not raise or drop their voices correctly.
Checking for Understanding

During the guided reading lessons, the teacher checked for understanding often and clarified the students' answers when necessary. A variety of open-ended and closed-ended comprehension questions asked students to draw conclusions based on words and pictures during the reading and after reading. The teacher always allowed a considerable amount of think-time, so most students were able to figure out the answer. The teacher also asked students to provide a reason for most of the answers they gave. The teacher asked questions that required students to refer back to the text to answer. Two examples of this include: "Your job is to reread page six and find the spot where we are told where they hibernate." and "Find the sentence where it talks about the newer stars." Students were also asked for feeling words to describe what the characters were feeling and why characters were feeling that way. Then the teacher used the student's words or feelings words of her own in a follow-up sentence. For example, the teacher said, "How does she feel inside? The shy woman went to meet some friends."

When students did not know the answer to a question, the teacher provided a page where students could find the answer. For example, the teacher said, "You learned that on page eight." When students did not know an answer, the teacher reread a key sentence, and then asked the students to reread the key sentence with her. After that, the teacher asked the original question again. The teacher also rephrased questions when students did not know the answer. At the end of the page, the teacher asked for students to summarize what they just read by asking, "What did the author tell us on this page?" The teacher praised the students for thinking about what they were reading. When
students responded to questions, the teacher used the response to form another comprehension question. This was evidenced when a student gave a correct answer and the teacher said, “Yes, they are trying to get him to talk. What are they trying to get him to say?”

Sometimes, students were unable to give correct answers. If a student did not give a correct answer, the teacher said, “Is that what the author wanted to tell us?” After the teacher allowed a few minutes of think-time, she modeled a think-aloud about finding the correct answer. One example of a think-aloud that the teacher modeled was, “I see their heads. They have such long necks that they are up out of the water, so I know that they can still breathe.” When a student gives an off-target answer or a partial answer, the teacher asks the question in a different way. For example, the teacher said, “Why is it bright?” “How do they make light?” Another time when a student gave a wrong answer, the teacher wrote two fill-in-the-blank sentences on the white board to guide the student for the correct answer. An example is: The little girl wants the spider to _______. And then________. When students gave one-word or very short answers to comprehension questions, the teacher probed for elaboration by saying, “What else do you notice about the picture, what do you see?” Other times, the teacher whispered, “Tell me more.”

Other times, the teacher helped students paraphrase, summarize, and clarify their answer to comprehension questions. On several occasions, the teacher helped a student paraphrase his lengthy and off-topic responses to comprehension questions. Often, the teacher paraphrased students’ answer to questions, especially open-ended questions. She also clarified students’ answers. One example of clarifying is when the teacher said,
“You’re right, they’re trying to clean up.” In addition to summarizing a students’ answer, the teacher summarized the main point of each page. When students stammered and couldn’t think of the right word to answer a question, the teacher helped these students finish their thoughts and sentence.

**Teacher Read-Alouds**

**Effective Format of Teacher Read-alouds**

Teacher read-alouds took place for 20-25 minutes on a daily basis during the early afternoon. The entire class took part in the teacher read-alouds. Since the students had just come in from recess, the teacher set the timer for two minutes prior to beginning the teacher read-aloud. During this time, students were silent and calmed down from their time at recess. After the two-minute quiet time ended, the students were dismissed in groups of four to sit on a piece of carpet in the corner of the room. Students sat in four rows on the carpet. These rows were predetermined by the teacher at the beginning of the year. The teacher sat in a chair in front of the carpet where all students could see her and the book. The teacher would normally read one longer or two shorter books from a variety of genres during the read-aloud time. The text of the book was at a level that the students could not read independently. The teacher held the book so students could see the pictures at all times. All of the books had pictures.

First, the teacher introduced the title, author, and illustrator of the book while explaining the title page. She used and encouraged the students to use the author and illustrator’s first name throughout the story. If the book had received any awards, the teacher made note of the awards (e.g. Caldecott). If the book took place in another
country or state, the teacher showed the students that particular state or country on a large map. Next, the students are asked if the book is fiction or non-fiction. When students answered, they needed to provide a reason for their answer. The teacher often summarized their reasoning. For example, she said, “It’s non-fiction, so we are going to learn information about it.”

Before reading the book, the teacher guided the students through a class-wide picture walk. She asked questions throughout the picture walk and paraphrased students’ answers when appropriate. Then, the teacher asked students to make predictions about what would happen in the story. During this time, the teacher called on seven to ten students without affirming or disaffirming their predictions. Later in the story, the teacher brought up certain predictions and asked if their predictions were correct. The final step before reading was setting the purpose for the story.

During the reading, the teacher showed the students the directionality of the page by pointing to where she was reading. At times students were able to ask questions, make relevant comments, or make inferences at the end of each page. Sometimes students had to wait until the end of the book to ask questions or make comments. The teacher modeled think-alouds and modeled making predictions and inferences about the story during the story.

At the end of narrative stories, the teacher asked students to provide the following information about the story: (1) main characters, (2) problem, (3) solution or lesson learned, (4) big idea (main idea). After the main characters, problem, solution, and big idea were identified, approximately 10 students were able to ask questions or make
comments. Some students went up to the book to point out a picture with a question or comment. Other students asked questions from their seat. Many times the teacher repeated the question or comment then expanded on it. During this time, the teacher asked students to distinguish between real and pretend when students were making comments by saying, “But did that happen?” Some students explained what part of the book they liked the best during the sharing time, then the teacher turned in the book to that part. Since the teacher read-aloud only lasted 20-25 minutes, the teacher gave updates of how many students were left that could make comments or ask question. For instance, the teacher said, “Two more questions.”

The teacher also used teachable moments when they arose, like when student made fun of a story character for the clothes he was wearing. She discussed with the entire class about not making fun of others because of the clothes they were wearing. Another time the moral of the story was about fairness, so the teacher discussed this in greater detail because the class was attending a school-wide assembly concerning the Character Counts Fairness Award later that day. She also used teachable moments when a student used incorrect grammar, and she would rephrase their comment using correct grammar. For example, a student said, “So much happy.” The teacher followed up his comment by saying, “Oh, so much happier.”

The district reading coach said that teacher read alouds could be fiction and non-fiction. Often the reading is above the reading level of the majority of the class. Teacher read-alouds are designed to develop students’ vocabulary and language and build their background knowledge.
Mrs. Penn reported that she chose a variety of books including fiction and non-fiction. When she read out loud, she often stopped to define vocabulary. She also chose books that the students could use to practice vocabulary or comprehension skills. Sometimes the book was theme related, but most often it was not. During teacher read-alouds, she introduced the book, then looked at the cover and figured out what the students already knew about the book from the title and the pictures. When she read to them, she asked questions about vocabulary. For example, she has said, "What word could the author have used instead of..." The class decided on main characters, the problem, and the solution. Students used some comprehension skills to help understand the book better and make it more meaningful using schema, inferring, relating the text to self, and asking questions.

The kindergarten teachers had used big books as well as traditional books. They used the following methods: prediction; finding the cause and effect; identifying the title, author, illustrator, and title page introduction; saying whether the book is fiction or non-fiction; and summarizing. Some of the same methods from guided reading, such as letter recognition, concepts about print, and phonemic awareness, are used in the kindergarten classrooms.

**Tapping into Prior Experience and Making Connections**

The teacher built on both ELLs and native English speakers' prior experiences at the same time before and during reading. For example, she said, "Tell me something about the Pilgrims. Tell me what you know." "Remember when we learned that Pilgrim children didn’t go to school. What did they do instead?" Throughout the reading,
students were able to share their own experiences that related to the story. She also asked students how the story was related to a topic they learned about earlier in the day. “We learned about straw roofs earlier. What was dangerous about them?” Other times, she related the story to the students’ personal lives. This was demonstrated when the teacher stated, “Does anyone have a baby sister or brother? What do they do? See, that’s what Baby Rachel was doing.” The teacher made several connections from the teacher read-aloud to passages the students had been reading in guided reading time. She encouraged students to make connections like that throughout the story. Another time, the teacher related the story to another subject area, like science. For example, the teacher said, “We have learned about rattlesnakes. What do you know about rattlesnakes?” “Raise your hand if you remember from your dinosaur books if you know what a fem is.”

Checking for Understanding

The teacher asked many comprehension questions during the reading, even after the first page. Often, she repeated questions more than once before calling on a student for an answer, and she encouraged students to use context clues. Sometimes she read the page, asked the question, reread the page, and re-asked the question before students responded. The teacher used scaffolding to guide students to answer comprehension question. For example, after a student gave a partial response the teacher said, “And mama thinks...”

She also modeled think-alouds during reading. One example when she demonstrated a think-aloud was when she said, “So how will they pay them? We know they won’t pay them with money. So, they must have to pay him with harvest.” Students
were asked cause and effect questions during and after the reading. For instance, the teacher asked, "If we would make houses out of straw, what would happen?" The teacher also asked students to compare themselves to the characters in the story. During a story about Pilgrims, the teacher said, "How were Pilgrim children different from you?" Other comparison questions were asked when students were asked to compare two main animal characters in the book by examining their similarities and differences. The teacher also asked students how characters were feeling at certain points during the story. She would provide reasoning of why that character felt that way if students were unable to give reasoning, or sometimes the teacher said, "Tell me more."

There were times when students had difficulty answering a question correctly. When a student was unable to answer a question, the teacher asked the students to put themselves in the characters' shoes. During one story when many of the students were stumped over a question, she said, "Why wouldn't you want to be near the door?" Other times when a student gave a wrong answer, the teacher made the situation relevant to the students and connected it with their personal lives. If a student gave a vague answer, the teacher asked a clarification question, calling on another student to build upon the response. At times, the teacher repeated students' answers for the entire class to hear. Sometimes she summarized and paraphrased in three short points what students said if the answers were unclear. The teacher added small words, like "if," "or," "and" when students needed help completing their thoughts and sentences.
Utilizing Rich Illustrations and Non-verbal Gestures

Since all of the teacher read-aloud texts contained illustrations, the pictures played an important role. Before reading, the teacher pointed out the role of the illustrations in the book. She said, "See, we can learn about the story from the pictures." During reading, the teacher used her finger to point out illustrations that matched the text, pointed out important aspects in the pictures, and explained why the pictures were meaningful. Other times, the teacher talked about an illustration in a book and asked students to make a prediction based on the illustration. The teacher also asked inference questions based on the illustrations. After asking for students' inferences, she gave her own inferences and explained how the illustrations students understand what is happening in the story or know how the characters are feeling. When the teacher showed the students pictures, she explained the pictures using two different feelings words, startled and surprised. Another way the illustrations were used was when the teacher showed contrasting illustration to demonstrate conflict in the story. Throughout the story, the students were encouraged to raise their hands and share about things they saw in the pictures.

In addition to using illustrations in the teacher read-alouds, the teacher utilized many non-verbal gestures. During the reading, the teacher asked students to give visual representations that would help define vocabulary. For example, the teacher said, "Show me, Alen, what it would look like if she clutched a branch." She also used gestures or hand motions that went along with the text. The teacher demonstrated this when she used her hands to show the depth differences between three feet of snow and five feet of snow.
Students were also able to act out gestures from the story, such as moving their arms in a flying motion during a story about airplanes.

Using Appropriate Accommodations

The teacher made many accommodations during the teacher read-alouds to make the text more understandable and the book more reader-friendly. Sometimes, the teacher explained plot prior to reading the page and changed some words in the book, or she summarized longer sections of text to make it more understandable. Other times, the teacher explained concepts in the text that may not have been obvious by just the words. She also described unfamiliar facts from the text, such as outdoor ovens, in more detail than the book and pointed to the illustrations while doing this to support her explanation.

The teacher paused between phrases in a sentence, and she separated words to show their significance. For example, the teacher paused for several moments between phrases when she said, “Who trumpeted to hippo -- who bellowed to wart hog -- who snorted to giraffe.” Another time the teacher utilized pauses during a pattern phrase in the story so that students could catch on and learn the pattern. When the teacher paused, the students were encouraged to repeat the pattern phrase throughout the book. She also emphasized certain words that were the main idea of the sentence, and used voice fluctuations according to the text.

Defining Vocabulary

Since the text of teacher read-alouds was more advanced than what the students could read independently, there were often many words that needed to be defined. Sometimes, the teacher simply defined certain words from the story. During one story
she said, “A settlement is their little town, the place where they started living.” Additionally, the teacher described unfamiliar words by using synonyms, or she asked students to think of synonyms during the story to describe a word. The teacher used vocabulary in two different contexts and sentences to show various meanings. For example, she said, “Your adorable son. What’s another word for adorable? Maybe you’ve heard people say an adorable baby. Yes, it means the same thing as cute.”

She also defined an unknown vocabulary word by describing a prior experience that students may have experienced. She then used this vocabulary word later in discussion. For instance, the teacher was defining blisters and she said, “You may have gotten a blister sometime when your shoes may have been too small or when you had a sore feeling from the monkey bars.” She also used a variety of vocabulary to describe many situations. In one book about sleeping, the teacher said, “Everyone is dozing, everyone is sleeping.”

Sometimes, the teacher described unknown objects by how they look and taste (e.g. lima bean). When a student raised his hand to ask what a tack was, the teacher pulled a tack off the bulletin board to answer. Some books contained figurative language. When this occurred, the teacher asked the students to visualize the situation and share with the class what they thought the phrase meant. Then, she described what the phrase, such as a blanket of snow, actually meant.

Other times students defined unfamiliar words at the request of the teacher. After the teacher asked a student about a definition, she reread the sentence and pointed to an illustration to guide the student. When the teacher asked students to define common
phrases and a student gave a simple response, the teacher built on it to give a full explanation. When a student gave a definition, the teacher also asked that student how that word was different from a word similar to it. This was demonstrated when the teacher said, “How are pale and flushed different?” Sometimes a student used a word that was unfamiliar to the rest of the class, such as invisible, so the teacher asked the student to tell what the word means.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This study sought to answer the following questions: (1) What absolute growth in reading accuracy and decoding, fluency, comprehension, phonological processing, phonemic correspondence, vocabulary, and correctly used language structures is seen in this group of ELLs when their teacher is using guided reading and teacher read-alouds? (2) How does growth in reading accuracy and decoding, fluency, comprehension, phonological processing, phonemic correspondence, vocabulary, and correctly used language structures differ between these ELLs and native speakers when their teacher is using guided reading and teacher read-alouds? (3) What methods, materials, and communication does the teacher use while reading aloud to ELLs and native speakers?

Native speakers in English begin with an advantage over ELL students because of their prior experiences in English. ELL students are put at even more of a disadvantage when they do not develop strong vocabularies, which may result in hindered comprehension and beginning reading skills (Hutchinson et al., 2003).

Absolute Growth

Although they faced the challenge of learning a new language (Hutchinson et al., 2003), the ELL students’ reading and language skills improved. Four out of the five ELLs made steady increases in their reading accuracy at a decoding level, fluency, and comprehension during the 12-week study. One ELL did not improve his skills during this time period. ELLs receive immediate and visual access to vocabulary and exposure to English when adults read aloud to them. Reading aloud, whether using shared or
guided reading methods or teacher read-alouds, models language patterns to ELLs, and
students can imitate sounds and sentence structures (Vivas, 1996). This may have
contributed to these students' improved skills. Four out of the five ELLs demonstrated
significant growth in phonological processing and phoneme-grapheme correspondence.
One student did not make significant growth; however, he raised his score and had the
highest score overall.

Vivas (1996) states that in general, preschool and first grade students significantly
increase language comprehension and expression after being exposed to stories read
 aloud at school or at home. Children who hear a variety of stories read aloud may
develop more vocabulary and syntactic complexity in their language skills, listening
skills, and abilities to organize narrative thoughts. All of these skills or abilities increase
early literacy development (Speaker et al., 2004). All participating students in this study
participated in two language experiences and told stories that required them to use
vocabulary and syntactic complexity in their language skills, listening skills, and abilities
to organize narrative thoughts. Three out of five ELLs made growth here. At the
beginning of the study, four ELLs scored at the early intermediate level, and one student
scored at the intermediate level. At the end of the study, one ELL scored at the early
intermediate level, and four students scored at the intermediate level. Two ELLs stayed
at their current level of early intermediate and intermediate respectively during the entire
study.

According to Alanis (2004), academic achievement gains are most frequent when
teachers utilize the student's primary language. When a student's primary language can
be used along with English, the student sees language connections while learning content. Considering the array of languages represented in this classroom, this task was impractical for the classroom teacher. Yet, as Gersten and Geva (2003) suggest, explicit instructional strategies that show connections between languages may contribute to reading growth in ELLs, even if all instruction is in English. If these students' primary languages could have been utilized in their teacher's instruction, these results may have been even more positive.

**Differences in Reading Skills**

There is an achievement gap between ELLs and native English speakers. The widest achievement gap exists in the content area of reading (Alanis, 2004). One estimate says that ELLs require two years to develop social communications and five to seven years to develop academic competencies (Hutchinson et al., 2003). It is a challenging task for ELLs to learn both language and academic content at the same time (Gersten, 2002). English native speakers have an advantage over ELL students because of their prior language experiences, resulting in a significant vocabulary gap between them. The achievement gap is widened further in a classroom environment not conducive to language learning (Hutchinson et al., 2003). Yet, the gains in reading accuracy and decoding, fluency, comprehension, phonological processing, phonemic correspondence, vocabulary, and correctly used language structures between ELLs and native speakers after utilizing guided reading and teacher read-alouds were uncertain.

This study found there were growth differences between ELLs and native speakers in a classroom where the teacher used guided reading and teacher read-alouds.
At the beginning of the study, an ELL was paired with a native English speaker with the same reading level. Midway through the study the native English speakers made greater gains on average than the ELLs. Three out of five native English speakers had higher DRA scores than their peer that they were partnered with at the beginning of the study. Overall, the average increase of DRA levels from the beginning of the study to the end of the study was greater for the native English speakers than for the ELLs. Early English experiences foster reading comprehension and facilitate phonemic awareness, two of the five elements of reading (Hutchinson et al., 2003). This may have contributed to the greater increases in the DRA levels of the native English speakers compared to the ELLs.

The native English speakers had higher scores in phonological processing and phoneme-grapheme correspondence areas at the beginning of the study. In the middle and at the end of the study, the ELLs were making greater gains than the native English speakers, decreasing the gap between the two groups. Overall, the ELLs made significantly greater gains than the native English speakers from the beginning to the end of the study, yet the native English speakers had slightly higher scores at the end of the study. It is important to recognize the growth of the ELLs and their greater average growth as compared to native speakers. However, one also should consider that the scores had a ceiling of 50 points. Students who scored high at the beginning of the study had little room for improvement. Even when ELLs and native speakers similarly develop phonological awareness and beginning reading skills (Gersten & Geva, 2003), there still may be a wide achievement gap between the two groups’ reading abilities (Alanis, 2004).
The differences between ELLs and native English speakers were more visible at the beginning of the study when the students told a story and their language sequences were examined. Since much of learning other content is based upon reading comprehension, the vocabulary of ELLs not only influences their reading skills, but ultimately their academic progress (Alanis, 2004). At the beginning of the study, more native English speakers scored at the intermediate level than did the ELLs. More ELLs, in contrast, scored at the early intermediate level. The gap closed at the end of the study when more ELLs scored at the intermediate level than did the native English speakers. Two ELLs stayed at their same language levels during the entire study. One native English speaker remained at the same level during the entire study, while one native English speaker moved from the intermediate to the early intermediate level due to dictating a simple story. Speaker et al. (2004) assessed the qualitative changes in verbal fluency (vocabulary, grammar, length of utterance and sentence formation) in five three-, four-, and five-year olds students who were enrolled in a vigorous read aloud program for students with diverse language skills. When all participants made significant gains in their mean length of utterance after 40 books were read aloud to them, the researchers concluded that ELLs’ language development can be fostered and the relationship between oral and written language is more apparent by reading books aloud.

Methods, Materials, and Communication

The classroom teacher, Mrs. Peen, used the same effective methods, materials, and communication for both the ELLs and the native English speakers. The classroom teacher, Mrs. Penn, used research based strategies for both groups of students. If she
made any accommodations in a lesson, all students received the accommodation. The quality materials with rich illustrations were presented to both groups of students, and she provided intensive support and scaffolding to any student who may have benefited from it. Her communication to each student was the same. Her teaching style proves one to be beneficial to ELLs as well as native English speakers.

**Guided Reading**

The teacher used various methods, material, and styles of communication when utilizing guided reading with ELLs and native English speakers. The following themes were evident from the observations of the guided reading: effective format of guided reading, tapping into prior experiences and making predictions, defining vocabulary, utilizing rich illustrations and non-verbal communication, decoding words and rereading text, teaching grammar, and checking for understanding.

**Effective format of guided reading.** Reading aloud, whether using shared or guided reading methods or teacher read-alouds, models language patterns to ELLs, and students can imitate sounds and sentence structures (Vivas, 1996). When teachers read aloud, ELLs begin to distinguish that print and speech are different, but that both print and speech have meaning (Kimbell-Lopez, 2003). Information books, or nonfiction books, can be motivating because they tap into the student's interests, and students can begin "knowledge seeking" (Dreher, 2003). Mrs. Penn modeled language patterns verbally and on the whiteboard during guided reading session, while demonstrating that print and speech have meaning. She used a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts.
Tapping into prior experience and making predictions. It is more beneficial when a child becomes actively involved in the literacy experience by predicting, retelling, or asking questions rather than simply reading aloud daily (Arnold & Colburn, 2005). Teachers need to model predicting, retelling, and asking questions so students can learn how to become actively involved. This needs to be reinforced in later reading and writing activities to capitalize on the full benefits of reading aloud (Speaker, Taylor, & Karmen, 2004).

ELL teachers must be aware of students' prior knowledge before instruction begins. Teachers build upon prior knowledge and scaffold ELLs to higher levels of language development. Having a language rich environment is another key component of ELL instruction and is a tool to help students reach language proficiency. Language rich classrooms have labeled signs, posted schedules, interesting magazines, and everyday language visible for students to see (Elley, 1997). Mrs. Penn tapped all students' prior experiences to make the reading more meaningful. Students were encouraged to make predictions before and during reading.

Defining Vocabulary. Since there is a strong correlation between level of vocabulary and level of reading development (Elley, 1997), ELLs need immediate and visual access to vocabulary to develop English proficiency (Athaide-Shannon, 2005). Mrs. Penn used numerous strategies to introduce, define, and use a vast amount of vocabulary during guided reading.

Utilizing rich illustrations and non-verbal communication. The texts that were used featured rich, meaningful illustrations that Mrs. Penn explained in further detail.
Vocabulary learning is greatest when the following takes place: stories are read and key words are defined, words appear more than once in a story or illustration, and the book is interesting, meaningful, and comprehensible to the students (Brabham & Lynch-Brown, 2002).

**Decoding words and rereading text.** Knowledge about and understanding of words is one of the most important pieces of early reading achievement and comprehension. Teachers must teach strategies to ELLs that good readers practice and model making meaning with the text since ELLs are often unfamiliar with English and lack relevant prior experiences (Kimbell-Lopez, 2003). Mrs. Penn modeled think-alouds and requested students reread certain part of the text to further knowledge and understanding of words.

**Teaching grammar.** Reading aloud models language patterns to ELLs, and they can imitate sounds and sentence structures (Vivas, 1996). Follow-up writing activities allow students to practice using language structure (Athaide-Shannon, 2005). Mrs. Penn used the whiteboard often for mini-grammar lessons. This tool helped students imitate sounds and learn about appropriate sentence structures.

**Checking for understanding.** Increasing reading comprehension and developing vocabulary are further benefits from exposure to text. Reading aloud to ELLs serves as a means of exposing students to text, especially when a teacher uses an interactive style of reading aloud (Ulanoff & Pucci, 1999). Growth in reading comprehension subsequently fosters writing, speaking, and other language skills (Elley, 1991). Checking for students' understanding, which Mrs. Penn consistently did, is one way to foster this growth.
Teacher Read-alouds

In addition to the methods, material, and styles of communication when utilizing guided reading with ELLs and native English speakers, Mrs. Penn also used similar methods, materials, and communication during teacher read-alouds. The following themes were evident from the observations of the teacher read-alouds: an effective format for teacher read-alouds, tapping prior experiences and making connections, checking for understanding, utilizing rich illustrations and gestures, using appropriate accommodations, and defining vocabulary.

Effective format of teacher read-alouds. There are two main goals of reading aloud to ELLs. The goal of reading aloud is to create independent readers (Kimbell-Lopez, 2003). Another purpose of reading aloud is to enhance interactive activities between adults and ELLs to stimulate questions and encourage conversation (Vivas, 1996). The format of Mrs. Penn’s teacher read-alouds were very interactive filled with questions and rich conversation.

Tapping into prior experience and making connections. Just as Mrs. Penn demonstrated, teachers of ELLs must be aware of students' prior knowledge and language development before instruction begins (Elley, 1997). Since there is a strong correlation between level of vocabulary and level of reading development (Elley, 1997), ELLs need immediate and visual access to vocabulary to develop English proficiency. One way to expose ELLs to vocabulary is by immersing them in a language rich environment that is meaningful and draws upon prior experiences (Alanis, 2004; Athaide-Shannon, 2005).
Checking for understanding. Hutchinson et al. (2003) found that ELLs and native speakers’ reading accuracy, or decoding, was often similar. However, ELLs had significantly poorer reading and listening comprehension skills. It may appear to a teacher that an ELL has good reading skills, but reading decoding and reading comprehension do not develop simultaneously. It is crucial for teachers of ELLs to understand that when an ELL is reading with accuracy, and the teacher still needs to check for understanding. Mrs. Penn consistently checked for students’ understanding during and after reading.

Utilizing rich illustrations and non-verbal gestures. All of the stories that Mrs. Penn used utilized illustrations and she used non-verbal gestures to further students’ understanding. Not only do ELLs learn English more quickly when the texts are meaningful, but meaningful stories implemented with rich vocabulary, interesting illustrations, and follow-up strategies related to the reading are the key elements that foster understanding (Athaide-Shannon, 2005).

Using appropriate accommodations. Exposure to English and hearing stories read aloud significantly increase English language acquisition (Chang, 1994); however, knowledge about and the understanding of words is one of the most critical pieces of early reading achievement and comprehension. If students are using texts that they cannot understand because of lack of useful prior experiences, their vocabulary understanding will be limited. This affects ELLs’ comprehension and language proficiency (Hutchinson et al., 2003). When it was questionable if students would understand the text, Mrs. Penn provided accommodations to all students allowing them to comprehend the reading.
Defining vocabulary. When adults read and discuss stories with ELLs, the students hear more formal and richer vocabulary than in an English conversation (Alanis, 2004). This is especially true in teacher read-alouds because rich vocabulary is used more often in teacher read-alouds than shared or guided reading methods (Militante, 2006). Mrs. Penn grasped many opportunities to use various strategies when defining vocabulary.

Limitations

Limitations exist in this study. There were 10 participants, five native speakers of English and five ELLs from one classroom. The limited participants result in a balanced case study; therefore, the results will not be generalizable. Another limitation is that the largest ethnicity representation in the research state is Hispanic, and this ethnicity was not represented in the study or the research classroom. Again, these results may not be generalizable due to that factor. Yet, generalization is not a goal of qualitative studies in the same way that it is for quantitative research (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). With qualitative research, both the researcher and the reader are accountable for making meaning and interpreting the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Implications for School Psychologists

There are a number of important implications of this research for school psychologists. Hutchinson et al. (2003) found that ELLs and native speakers’ reading accuracy, or decoding, was often similar. However, ELLs had significantly poorer reading and listening comprehension skills. School psychologists need to be conscious of ELLs’ reading skills because reading decoding and reading comprehension do not
develop simultaneously. It is crucial for school psychologists to understand that when an ELL is reading with accuracy, he or she may not comprehend the text.

School psychologists also need to be aware of and inform other educators about reasonable expectations for ELLs. It is a demanding task for ELLs to learn both language and content at the same time (Gersten, 2002). English native speakers have an advantage over ELL students because of their prior language experiences, resulting in a significant vocabulary gap between them. ELL students’ limited vocabulary skills may then contribute to poorer reading comprehension and beginning reading skills (Hutchinson et al., 2003). Providing appropriate and intensive support, as well as effectively reading aloud to ELLs, are both necessary because learning other content is based upon reading comprehension. Consequently, the vocabulary of ELLs not only influences their reading skills, but ultimately their academic progress (Alanis, 2004).

**Conclusion**

Researchers have addressed the problem of teachers becoming ELL teachers by default, and consequently they may feel uncertain because of the responsibility to teach both language and content (Gersten, 2002). Additionally, researchers have found that an achievement gap exists between ELLs and native speakers, especially in the content area of reading (Alanis, 2004). However, ELLs greatly benefit from having books read aloud in a shared reading, guided reading, or through teacher read-alouds because they hear new vocabulary, sentences, ideas, and text structures (Alanis, 2004). Reading aloud models language patterns, so ELLs can imitate sound and sentence structures which increase their vocabulary (Vivas, 1996). This study found that most ELLs represented in
this study were making growth in reading accuracy and decoding, fluency, comprehension, phonological processing, phonemic correspondence, vocabulary, and correctly used language structures when their teacher was using guided reading and teacher read-alouds.

ELLs were faced with a disadvantage of less prior experience and exposure to English (Hutchinson et al., 2003), and this became evident when native English speakers made more growth in the areas of reading accuracy and decoding, fluency, and comprehension. However, at the end of the study the ELLs and native English speakers had comparable scores in their phonological processing, phonemic correspondence, and correctly used language structures. The teacher themes were consistently apparent during guided reading lessons: using an effective format of guided reading, tapping into prior experiences and making predictions, defining vocabulary, utilizing rich illustrations and non-verbal communication, decoding words and rereading text, teaching grammar, and checking for understanding. Themes that were used consistently and were evident in teacher read-alouds include: using an effective format for teacher read-alouds, tapping prior experiences and making connections, checking for understanding, utilizing rich illustrations and gestures, using appropriate accommodations, and defining vocabulary.
Table 1

Summary of students’ language experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>A. Which language did your child first learn to speak?</th>
<th>B. Which language did you first learn to speak?</th>
<th>Where was your child born?</th>
<th>When has he or she moved to the research city?</th>
<th>A. Which language does your child use most often at home?</th>
<th>B. Which language do you use most often at home?</th>
<th>Does your child understand a language other than English?</th>
<th>Has your child been influenced by a language other than English by someone?</th>
<th>What schools has your child attended?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>b. English</td>
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<td>b. English</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>a. English</td>
<td>Research city</td>
<td>a. English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Kat Elem. and other district school</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>b. English</td>
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<td>b. English</td>
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<td>b. English</td>
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(Table continues)
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<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>A. Which language did your child first learn to speak?</th>
<th>B. Which language did you first learn to speak?</th>
<th>Where was your child born? When has he or she moved to the research city?</th>
<th>A. Which language does your child use most often at home?</th>
<th>B. Which language do you use most often at home?</th>
<th>Which language do you most often use to speak to your child?</th>
<th>Does your child understand a language other than English?</th>
<th>Has your child been influenced by a language other than English by someone?</th>
<th>What schools has your child attended?</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Drazen</td>
<td>a. Bosnian b. Bosnian</td>
<td>Research city</td>
<td>a. English and Bosnian b. Bosnian</td>
<td>Bosnian</td>
<td>Bosnian</td>
<td>Grandparents (both sides) and family</td>
<td>Kat Elem. and other district school</td>
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<td></td>
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Table 2

Summary of Scores

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alen</th>
<th>Bada</th>
<th>Cadil</th>
<th>Drazen</th>
<th>Emir</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pre DRA</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pre PAT</strong></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre Lang. Exp. Level</strong></td>
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<td>Early intermediate</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Early intermediate</td>
<td>Early intermediate</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mid DRA</strong></td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mid PAT</strong></td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>41</td>
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<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Post DRA</strong></td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post PAT</strong></td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>49</td>
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</tr>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>Early intermediate</td>
<td>Early intermediate</td>
<td>Early intermediate</td>
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<td><strong>Post PAT</strong></td>
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<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Post Lang. Exp. Level</strong></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Early intermediate</td>
<td>Early intermediate</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1
Language experience example

Name: Alen
Topic: Friends

Pre (11-9-06)
My friends going to the park. I am going too because they are nice. I like them. He
doesn't play with me. We can play with other because we are friends. This is my story.

Post (2-12-07)
My friends, they all play with me sometimes and they help me when I get hurt and I feel
better. When I read a book, I help them to read. And they say to me, "Thank you for
They all help me and I help everyone to care. Then I thank you all to my friends. You're
respectful to me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Structures Used</th>
<th>Language Structures Used</th>
<th>Language Developmental Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correctly</td>
<td>Incorrectly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating conjunction use – “I am going too because they are nice.”</td>
<td>To be verb/present progressive used incorrectly – “My friends going to the park.”</td>
<td>Early intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct use of contractions – “doesn’t”</td>
<td>Incorrect use of plurals – “We can play with other because…”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct use of coordinating clauses – “…sometimes and they help me…”</td>
<td>Incorrect subject/verb agreement – “Then I thank you all to my friends” and “My friends, they all…”</td>
<td>Early intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct use of adverbial clause – When I read a book, I help them…”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct use of contractions – “you’re”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct use of pronouns – “them”</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

HOME-LANGUAGE SURVEY
Thank you for willing to participate in this study. Please answer the following questions with as many important details or examples as you can. Thank you!

1. Which language did your child first learn to speak?

2. Where was your child born? When have they moved?

3. What language does your child use most often at home?

4. What language do you most often use to speak to your child?

5. Does your child understand a language other than English?

6. Has your child been influenced by a language other than English by someone such as a grandparent, baby-sitter, or other adult?

7. What schools has your child attended?
APPENDIX B

FOCUSED OBSERVATION CHECK-LIST
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELL Observation Checklist</th>
<th>Ye s</th>
<th>No opportunity to observe</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Name:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School:</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Chooses activities that are appropriate for students at various stages of English acquisition</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Uses a variety of instructional activities to respond to diverse learning styles and needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Uses prompts and cues to assist students</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Models correct form and explains why answer was correct/incorrect</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Enunciates clearly, makes limited use of idiomatic speech, talks about symbolic meaning, and interprets connotations</td>
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<td>6. Presents information in more than one way</td>
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<td>7. Uses contextual clues: body language, visuals, graphic organizers, and media support</td>
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<td>8. Provides opportunities for students to use lots of language</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX C

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRES
Thank you for willing to participate in this study. Please answer the following questions with as many important details or examples as you can. Thank you!

1. What current methods do you use in your classroom?

2. What current methods do you use during guided reading?

3. What current methods do you use during the teacher read-alouds?

4. What specific materials do you use for your ELLs? Native speakers?

5. What type of communication do you use when reading aloud to ELLs? Native speakers?