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A COMPARISON OF VOCABULARY STRATEGIES DURING AN INTERACTIVE READ ALOUD

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A COMPARISON ON VOCABULARY STRATEGIES DURING AN INTERACTIVE READ ALOUD

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ABSTRACT

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Over the course of a 6-week period, an action research study was conducted in a fourth-grade classroom at a public school in Wisconsin. The purpose of this study was to compare two vocabulary instructional strategies, pre-teach with visuals and context clues, during an interactive read aloud. Read aloud routines and expectations were put forth in order to teach the students how to effectively respond to and listen to an interactive read aloud. Students then participated in explicit instruction with each strategy. Data collection included a pretest, weekly quizzes, and a posttest. These were analyzed in order to conclude which vocabulary strategy had higher results. Statistical data analysis indicated that pre-teach with visuals supported consistent growth in higher results.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

I teach reading using the Teacher's College Units of Study for Teaching Reading (Calkins, 2015). The structure to reader's workshop is as follows: 10-minute mini-lesson from the suggested unit of study (for example: Interpreting Characters, Reading the Weather, Reading the World, Reading History: Civil War Unit), 30 minutes for independent reading (here the teacher confers, forms small strategy groups), and a 20-minute interactive read aloud. Any reader's workshop teacher would be able to conclude that there is simply never enough time to teach all the necessary reading components. The "Units of Study" itself has already perfectly laid out superb lessons that encourage deep thinking about books, but often leave out other core components that need to be taught during small group time. As listed prior, there are 30 minutes for independent time where the teacher pulls for conferences and small groups. Yet, there never seems to be enough time to teach all reading components because of the importance of not taking away too much independent reading time. This is the tough fact that I have to face when developing my fourth graders into balanced readers with a variety of skills.

As I think about connecting read aloud time and new vocabulary learnings, I think about the importance of learning new words. There were probably multiple times that I breezed through unknown words to my fourth graders or times we talked about unknown words but didn't get too into it. To be brutally honest, I have always struggled with

words, and am not afraid to admit this to students. I sometimes struggle with what the word means and how to pronounce it. I found that with my students from the 2018-2019 school year that opening up to them about this allowed for a greater connection in creating a learning environment where teachers and students can learn aside one another. As someone who tends to do ample reflection, both professionally and personally, I find that identifying my flaws drives me to improve upon them. A teacher once told me "never stop learning" and I hope to ingrain that in my own students as well.

I strictly taught vocabulary strictly during the 2018-2019 school year to students who scored below one grade level on the standardized iReady assessment. Even though I still had students that were more than one grade level below in vocabulary, I did not feel that vocabulary was as important to teach as phonics and high frequency words because I followed the hierarchy model provided by Serravallo (2015). In the hierarchy model, foundational word work, phonics, character analysis, and plot/setting are focused on before comprehension and vocabulary. On top of that, the idea of dedicating time to teach whole group vocabulary lessons made me feel anxious because of my own personal struggles. The positive side to this story was that no matter where students stood on the iReady scale, each and every student was on the edge of their seat engaged during our 20-minute interactive read aloud time. Students were constantly talking about the books and applying reading skills like predicting, visualizing, etc. Knowing this, it made me wonder about using more reading components during our interactive read aloud.

Throughout all of this contemplating, processing, and planning, I thought of a better way to use our precious time, engage all learners, and learn important vocabulary strategies by incorporating them during our interactive read aloud.

Purpose of the Study

One obstacle to learning new vocabulary words is our easy access to technology or internet services. Students of the 2018-2019 school year would be able to confess to the fact that I have used Google in front of them to figure out words we both did not know. I am guilty of this and would like to work towards creating a sense of vocabulary instruction that any teacher could use instead of resorting to Google. Students should also work towards using effective strategies to decipher unknown words.

I used a variety of websites to help narrow down effective vocabulary strategies I could teach that would help students retain and use vocabulary independently. Our district used and purchased Jennifer Serravallo's Reading Strategies Book (2015) as it coincides with the research done for our curriculum—Units of Study. Paging through, I found that many of the strategies linked towards context clues. This strategy has shown its importance in teaching readers how to identify and define unknown words. In fact, I was able to locate some of the early studies on context clues dating back to 1943. Some of the top researchers at this time were Artley and McCullough. As stated in McCullough's article, "Professor A.S. Artley described numerous types of context clues that may assist the reader in discovering the meaning of new words" (McCullough, 1943, p. 140). This strategy remains important in the field of education today because it is a standard that fourth graders must reach per Common Core State Standards [CCSS] (2014)—English Language Arts Standards, "Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 4 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies" (L.4.4), and "Use context (e.g., definitions, examples, or restatements in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase" (L.4.4A)

This research is conducted in a state that uses CCSS which makes this study more purposeful and meaningful to learners using these standards.

This study aims to compare vocabulary strategies. I will compare two vocabulary strategies: preteaching prior to read-aloud time and using context clues during read-aloud time. Using visuals with pre-teach terms is another idea I would like to implement. Many preservice teachers hear about pre taught vocabulary terms with English Language Learners (ELL), and veteran teachers that use district-mandated curriculums may preteach vocabulary based on what the suggested manual states. When creating this study, I wanted to see the effects of preteaching vocabulary terms with visuals on certain groups of students, especially students with reading disabilities or who were English Language Learners. My hypothesis is that context clues will perform higher results when compared to the pre-teach strategy.

Research Question

To determine effective vocabulary strategies, as described above, I chose to conduct a study that will allow teachers, including myself, to see the benefits of using the precious interactive read aloud time to incorporate vocabulary strategies that will foster retention and independence. I wanted this study to give me and other teachers confidence to see results in vocabulary.

Research Question: *When comparing two vocabulary strategies, context clues and pre-teach using visuals, during an interactive read aloud, which will have greater results?*

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching young learners reading is incredibly important in the modern classroom, leaving teachers highly motivated to be equipped with the best techniques and reading skills that will move students forward as readers. In 2000, the National Reading Panel Report released the five important components necessary to equip readers with such skills. These are: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000). Vocabulary is listed as one of the "five pillars" to create strong readers. Teachers must have meaningful and intentional instruction in order to foster vocabulary independence in readers.

This action research study emphasizes context clues and pre-teach vocabulary strategies in the fourth-grade classroom during an interactive read aloud. This paper will cover vocabulary word learning and the effects that vocabulary has on reading comprehension shown through various studies. Furthermore, this literature review will include vocabulary instructional studies that have been completed with emphasis on pre-teaching and using context clues. Lastly, it will note proper studies that identify word selection and studies that include using vocabulary and interactive read alouds.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary Word Learning

Vocabulary learning is very demanding in the elementary school setting, and the amount of vocabulary words that children need to learn does not slow down as they advance in age. It has been estimated that students need to learn between 1,000 (Goulden et al., 1990; D'Anna et al., 1991) to 3,000 (Beck & Mckeown, 1991) words a year. With research citing such high numbers of words to learn, teachers must be equipped with vocabulary strategies and effective instruction to meet these high demands. Accordingly, studies have been conducted to guide teachers, and therefore their learners, on how to accomplish this difficult task.

There is evidence to say that children learn vocabulary "incidentally." Brown, Waring, and Donkaewbua (2008) put this idea of incidental vocabulary learning to the test when they studied the outcomes of extensive independent reading, reading-while-listening, and listening-only. All of the conditions used showed results in word learning, with most words being learned through reading-while-listening. However, incidental learning will only take students part of the way to mastery of words.

One of the focuses of research on vocabulary learning has centered around repetition. Research from Beck, McKeown, and Perfetti (1982), replicated and refined by Mckeown, Beck, Omanson, and Perfetti (1983), demonstrates this idea. Through their research on fourth-grade students, they were able to find results that helped increase vocabulary knowledge through a) access to word meaning and expanded semantic connections and, importantly, b) additional encounters with the words. Another study performed by Mckeown, Beck, Omanson, and Pople (1985) further supported this use of

additional encounters with words. Their study used a variety of instructional strategies to determine which technique offered the best effectiveness for vocabulary attainment and found that rich instruction outperformed traditional instruction because students had these multiple encounters with the words.

Graves (2006) discusses that there is much complexity in truly knowing a word. He notes that a part of a word's development occurs over time and through experiences and exposures, and needs to be provided in multiple contexts in order to learn its meaning and use. This again touches on the idea that a single encounter with a word will likely not provide students with true knowledge. Dale (1965) provides additional support to this theory. He found that learning a word to mastery consists of four stages. These stages include: having no idea; knowing it orally but not knowing the meaning; being able to recognize it in context; and understanding it in a variety of contexts.

Biemiller & Boote (2006) conducted a comparative study to determine the findings of repeated reading with simple, direct word instruction. Repeated reading provided students with the opportunity to hear the word in context several times because students were exposed multiple times to books with target words. Two study groups were assigned. In study group one, the teacher was asked to read a text two-four times and stop to teach word meanings. In study group two, the teacher was asked to read a text two-four times and only ask the students what they think the word meant; they were then to refrain from teaching word meanings until the final day of the study. The results of the comparison showed that there were gains, in comparison to the pretest, for both study groups. Interestingly, there was a higher percentage in study group two.

Collectively looking at this above data shows the overall importance of repetition when it comes to vocabulary learning. Shown in multiple settings and through different approaches, repetition has evidence to suggest that it increases understanding of words. This is an aspect of teaching that must be incorporated in the classroom to encourage word learning.

Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension

The five pillars of strong readers, which again are phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, are intertwined in learning and correspond to one another. The National Reading Panel report said that instruction in vocabulary can lead to comprehension gains (p. 4-4). Multiple studies found that by the time students transitioned from learning to read to reading to learn, they faced the effects of a slump in reading comprehension because of below grade-level vocabulary (Becker, 1977; Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990). These studies show that there can be other factors to this slump such as fluency. Interestingly, Chall and Jacobs (2003) found that participants were considered on grade level in grades in second and third grades—that is, they were at grade level before they made the transition from learning to read to reading to learn.

One quantitative study by Hsueh-Chao and Nation (2000) demonstrated that the number of unknown word meanings can have a negative impact on students' text comprehension. The study consisted of adult English-speaking participants that scored a certain number on the Vocabulary Levels Test. These participants were then asked to read a text that included nonsense words that were unknown to the reader. Some participants were given a text in which they would know 90% or more of the words, and

they showed adequate comprehension. The other participants were given a text in which they would only know 80% of the words, and they showed inadequate comprehension. Overall, the study showed that there was a negative correlation between unknown words and comprehension (Hsueh-Chao & Nation, 2000, p. 422). Through this research, Hsueh-Chao and Nation were able to determine that readers must know at least 98% of the running words in order to comprehend the text. Grabe, Jiang, and Schmitt (2011) did similar research on the correlation between unknown words and reading comprehension, including a higher number of participants than Hsueh-Chao and Nation. This study asked the participants to first take a vocabulary assessment and then read texts including those same vocabulary words. Not surprisingly, the results also found a negative correlation between the percentage of words a student did not know and the student's reading comprehension of the passage (Grabe, Jiang & Schmitt, 2011).

Silverman et al. (2013) did a similar study comparing monolingual English students and Spanish-English bilingual students. They looked for differences between the two groups in both comprehension and vocabulary. These students were from third to fifth grades, and most of the data provided came from observations from research assistants (RAs). The RAs developed a codebook to include the most effective vocabulary and comprehension instruction. Context use and definitions were the most prominent types of vocabulary instruction, while literal and informational were the most prominent types of comprehension instruction. Through the vocabulary subtest and comprehension passages, evidence showed a positive correlation between knowledge of vocabulary and reading comprehension.

Research on Vocabulary Instruction

Despite its importance, teachers often give vocabulary instruction too little classroom time. Several researchers have investigated this time gap. Durkin's (1978-1979) study showed that out of 4,469 minutes of observing reading instruction, only 19 minutes were devoted to vocabulary instruction. Additionally, Roser and Juel (1982) found that many word-meaning instruction lessons were typically 0 to 12 minutes and sometimes did not focus on vocabulary instruction. This research shows the little amount of time spent on vocabulary instruction.

Regardless of the little amount of time spent teaching vocabulary instruction, much work has been done to improve it. The previously mentioned study by Silverman et al. (2013) separately described the effects of vocabulary instruction as well. They involved the RAs that developed the comprehension and vocabulary codebook. One important thing to note is that the codebook incorporated the five types of vocabulary instruction that were effective according to Hairrell et al. (2011). Hairrell et al.'s study found that the most researched types of vocabulary instruction include contextual analysis with definitions and examples, and attention to morphology. With these highly researched vocabulary instruction types, the RAs investigated the connection with vocabulary growth to teacher instruction. The study used single-normed measures including the Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey-Revised and Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals Fourth Edition and Extract the Base Test (Silverman et al., 2013, p. 39). The results showed a positive change in vocabulary when teachers focused on definitions, word relations, and morphosyntax (Silverman et al., 2013, p. 41).

Graves, author of *The Vocabulary Book: Learning and Instruction*, highlights that vocabulary instruction should be part of a four-part framework that includes the following components: (a) rich and diverse language encounters, (b) individually teaching words, (c) instruction on word-learning strategies, and (d) developing an awareness of new words. Manyak et al. (2014) used these four components to develop, implement, and research the Multifaceted Vocabulary Instruction Program (MCVIP). With the four components in mind, the MCVIP found that when observing the teachers and gaining their feedback, they found that using these components gave teachers the confidence to enhance their vocabulary instruction.

Context Clues

Fisher and Frey (2014) noted that vocabulary is not an isolated skill. Words and phrases require meaning; otherwise, they are just meaningless sounds and letters. Far too often students learn vocabulary through isolated lists. In fact, one observational study by Jamieson-Noel and Asselin (2003) found that vocabulary instruction used mostly dictionary searching and worksheets. It is important that teachers take the time to model vocabulary through pieces of text as they read aloud and demonstrate the use of word solving through context clues. Another study by Al-Darayseh (2014) measured the effectiveness of using context clues with explicit and implicit teachings versus a more traditional approach of using vocabulary lists and asking students to define and memorize the words. To measure these methods, Al-Darayseh used a pretest and posttest. The results showed students had tremendous growth when placed in rooms where explicit and implicit vocabulary strategies were taught versus those with traditional ways.

One study conducted by Kindle (2010) observed various teachers that read aloud and focused on word meaning. Through these observations, Kindle (2010) was able to identify various instructional strategies and philosophies that differed while observing each teacher. While there may have been differences between the teachers observed, one idea that remained consistent was that teachers continued to express that context clues was the most-important strategy for helping students learn new words.

Morphology

Context clues are a staple to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), as their website states, "Use context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase" and "Use common, grade-appropriate Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word" (CCSS, 2019). The importance of teaching students the valuable strategy of context clues also creates the need for using morphology as a central component to learning vocabulary. A vocabulary strategy, created by Jennifer Serravallo (2015), involves the students in looking in and out of unknown vocabulary words in order to define them. The ability to look "into the word" is to think about how it is being used and identify any affixes that are present. To look "out of the word" involves looking around the word to identify what is happening.

Morphology instruction focuses on students' ability to pay attention to morphemes (units of meaning in words), prefixes, suffixes, and/or Greek and Latin roots (Kucan, 2012). For example, a student would be able to decipher a word meaning by looking at the word "investigator" and use morphology knowledge to understand that the suffix is *–or* meaning "someone who." Another example would be for the student to use

morphology knowledge with word roots to determine the meaning of the word "perspective" and notice that the root word *–spect* means "to look at."

Anglin (1993) suggested that morphological problem solving is partly responsible for the rapid growth in the knowledge of the meaning of derivations between third and fifth grades. Bowers and Kirby's (2009) study focused on comparing fourth-grade students that received instruction on morphological word structure to those that did not receive instruction. The students that received instruction in morphology were able to perform higher in identifying vocabulary words. Additionally, the results showed that students were able to learn more complex words because they used their affix knowledge. Another study conducted by Pressley, Disney, and Anderson (2007) found evidence that teaching students morphological word parts when examining a word is valuable for vocabulary development in both children's and adults' ability to infer the meaning of words.

Pre-teach

The release of NICHD (2000) suggested that vocabulary instruction should be a central part of the lesson and should happen prior to reading (p. 4-22). Teachers who take time to pre-teach vocabulary terms prior to reading know that this strategy has been researched for a long time. Wixson (1986) studied 120 average and above-average fifth graders to determine the effectiveness of what pre-teaching terms can do for readers. The study showed that students had better understandings of the pre-taught terms, which had higher results in reading (Wixson, 1986, p. 317). Another study by Carr and Wixson (1986) also looked at how vocabulary and reading comprehension correlate, but actually wanted to emphasize their findings in effective vocabulary instruction. In conclusion,

their results included that the integration of using vocabulary with background knowledge, developing an elaborated word knowledge, actively involving students in learning, and encouragement of independent word learning will improve students' vocabulary knowledge (Carr & Wixson, 1986, p. 595).

More recently, Coulter and Lambert (2015) studied the idea of using pre-taught terms and their effects on reading accuracy and fluency in students with disabilities. They found that while there was an increase in accuracy and fluency when students were presented with prior words, they remained below reading benchmark. Coulter and Lambert (2015) found that using this technique required minimal instruction support, and still gave students access to the general education curriculum.

Word Selection

The teacher should predetermine the words prior to vocabulary instruction. Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013) suggest that words should be chosen based on a tier system. Tier One words include those that are typically found in oral language such as run, huge, etc. These are words that students are already familiar with and are exposed to at a young age. Tier Two words include words that are not commonly spoken or seen in everyday life, but are more prevalent in narrative texts. These would include precede, trespassing, retrospect, etc. Beck et. al suggest that Tier Two words be predominantly used in instruction. Tier Three words are limited to specific domains and include academic vocabulary. For example, the Tier Three word photosynthesis would be specific to the scientific language.

In addition to using the tiered system (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013), there is research on the effects of using morphological understandings to help students determine

the meaning of the unknown word. Hierbert, Goodwin and Cervetti (2017) found that morphological families make up the core vocabulary of school texts. This newer research took a close look at texts used in CCSS and its likelihood of word appearances. When measuring the presence of morphological families, the results showed a large percentage of words belonged to a family group of words. Knowing that there is a large percentage of morphological families present in K-8 grades, the study suggests that using families of words provides natural opportunities for students to have repeated exposure as well as additional practice to apply word families to solve the meanings of new words. Biemiller's (2005) study determined that there is an average amount of root word meanings that students should understand by each grade level. The study's conclusion showed that children at the end of second grade should understand about 6,000 root word meanings, and by the end of sixth grade should understand about 10,000.

Vocabulary and Reading Aloud

Teachers constantly strive to create classroom environments that are rich with written and oral language to assist with vocabulary development. Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) credits that children's books provide students with words they may not run into if they are not exposed to vast amounts of literature (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Nagy and Scott (2000) and Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) found that when students are immersed in rich and expansive written language, it is because the books are exposing children to vocabulary words that are outside of their current vocabulary understanding. For students to acquire vocabulary experiences with rich written words they must read above their reading level. This philosophy is difficult to adhere to as students have a range of individual abilities; therefore, it is challenging to find an

experience with just the right amount of word recognition and decoding abilities. This challenge can be addressed by reading aloud at higher reading levels, which can provide students with exposure to vocabulary words outside their current reading level.

The understanding is that students will be taught vocabulary by the teacher using vocabulary instruction strategies; however, it has also been noted through studies that reading aloud can create incidental vocabulary learning (Brown, Waring, & Donkaewbua, 2008) as the teacher stops and elaborates on specific words with precise explanations (Bravo et al., 2007). This is also supported by Biemiller and Boote (2006), who show that even giving explanations as brief as two sentences can be sufficient for students to make connections. Another study by Justice, Meier, and Walpole (2005) compared the use of elaborating on a word during Kindergarten story time and found that students made significant gains on the posttest when teachers' discussions were geared towards elaborating on the words. The final results added that storybook, or reading aloud to children, is a tool to foster vocabulary development.

Vocabulary Assessments

A variety of assessments are used in the everyday classroom for teachers to gather objective data on their students and determine growth. There are multiple ways this can be accomplished. One specific study conducted by McMillian, Myran, & Workman (2002) looked at teachers in third through fifth grade classrooms to study their assessment and grading practices. Their survey, analysis, and observations found that teachers cared deeply about academic performance when it came to giving students a letter grade. The results also showed that, across academic disciplines and grade levels,

constructed responses, object assessments, and teacher-made assessments were among the most popular choices.

Assessments are typically categorized as two distinct entities: formative or summative. The American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education [AERA, APA, & NCME] point out the idea that formative assessment involves the educator to gather concrete information and data to improve student learning, whereas summative assessment uses its data to determine how much a student knows or retained over a longer period of a learning sequence.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment allows the educator to use the data to improve student learning (AERA, APA, & NCME). This decision making in education is an essential component as educators collect data and monitor student progress (Hojnoski, Gischlar, & Missall, 2009). Additionally, it is important to help educators make decisions to determine next steps to accelerate learning or change instructional ways to better meet children's needs. Cook (2009) says that formative assessments are typically done in two ways—spontaneous and planned. Some of the spontaneous ways are to observe students' body language, conversation, or their answer to a question. Some planned formative assessments may include quizzes to assess student progress (Dixon & Worrell, 2016). The main goal of a formative assessment is to identify students' strengths, weaknesses, and learning gaps in the learning process (Cornelius, 2013).

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment is used over longer periods of time to determine student understanding and retention on a subject (AERA, APA, & NCME). Gardner (2010) points out that with this assessment over a longer period of time, summative assessments could even be considered more "high-stakes." Dixon & Worrell (2016) also point out that no formal learning typically takes place following a summative assessment. However, in the classroom they are, and should be used to get a final idea of how much a student knows about a particular subject. Some of the traditional classroom summative assessments include, but are not limited to, final exams, final performances, and term papers. Summative assessments can be state or district mandated. They are used as a final assessment of learning for students.

Summary

The research in this chapter makes it evident that vocabulary is an essential skill. When students are immersed with rich literature options, opened up to morphology understandings, and taught using a variety of vocabulary strategies, they will see positive results in their vocabulary skills. This review of literature showed positive results for using both pre-teaching strategies and context clues. It also included important research on interactive read alouds. The following action research will work to compare these two vocabulary strategies used in an interactive read aloud setting and analyze the results.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

My study aimed to determine the effectiveness of vocabulary strategies used during a whole-class read aloud. Specifically, I demonstrated which educational technique—context clues versus pre-teach strategy—was the best aid in developing students vocabulary. Lesson plans, data collection, and professional reflections allowed me to explore my research question and helped draw conclusions that will hopefully be expandable to other classrooms.

Context of the Study

This study was conducted in the fall of the 2019-2020 school year in my fourth-grade classroom at Lake Mills Elementary School (LMES) in Lake Mills, Wisconsin. LMES is a public school in a smaller populated city in Southeastern Wisconsin. LMES is the only elementary school in the district, and services K4 to 4th grade with a total of 620 students enrolled. Of these students, 87.6% are White, 8.1% are Latino/Hispanic, 0.8 % Black or African American, and 2.9% makes up two or more races. Additionally, 13.4% of the student population are students with disabilities, 25.6% are Economically Disadvantaged, and 4.5% are English Learners. Twenty fourth-grade students at LMES participated in this study. Of these twenty fourth-graders, 90% are White, 5% are Latino/Hispanic, and 5% are made up of two or more races.

Research Design and Rationale

This research study was part of an action-research design to determine the effectiveness of teaching general education vocabulary strategies during an interactive read aloud. Furthermore, this study compared two different vocabulary teaching strategies on my own fourth grade students. I developed this research plan to go along with my district's reading program Units of Study for Teaching Reading (Calkins, 2015). My goal was to determine the effectiveness of both vocabulary strategies by comparing results used in data collection. The study took place during a 15-minute period of a 60-minute reading workshop block. The six-week study began with a two-week period in which read aloud expectations were taught, followed by my two study comparisons; first a 2-week period focused on pre-teaching, followed by a 2-week period focused on context clues.

Procedure and Data Collection Plan

A comparative study was performed in my fourth-grade classroom during the 2019-2020 school year. The comparison looked at two different vocabulary instructional strategies: context clues and pre-teach terms while reading aloud from *Shiloh* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. This research began in the first couple weeks of school to ensure completion by the end of the University semester. Students felt confident using classroom routines and procedures in the beginning of the school year. As a teacher, I modeled and practiced reading workshop routines in order to help my students succeed with academic purposes.

Expectations

The first two weeks of the six week study helped students develop consistency in routines and procedures for read aloud. This consisted of three components: body basics, conversational expectations, and reader's notebooks. Body basics included the set up in which students had an opportunity to either a) move their chair, on wheels, towards me; b) sit on the carpet near my chair. Students found their own places for active listening and personal space. Once settled, students demonstrated additional body basics including active listening to me and keeping their hands/feet to themselves.

Students learned how to be good listeners by using a reading strategy developed by Serravallo (2015). This strategy included an anchor chart that reminds students of characteristics needed to listen well. Some of these included: start listening right away, nod to show you hear/understand, show confusion and ask, and sit still. Next, I set the expectations on conversations which was necessary to have a productive read aloud. Students took part in book conversations using a strategy developed by Serravallo. This work used sentence stems that helped the students keep their conversation. Some of the sentence stems that I taught students included some questions to ask their partner. For example, "What gave you that idea? Can you say more about that?" It also included some additional statements like, "I heard you say ____. I'm thinking _____." Lastly, I taught students how to productively use their reader's notebooks. This used a strategy developed by Serravallo known as "stop and jot." I introduced this to students by allowing them to use post-its and their reader's notebooks to show their thinking when they read a funny part, sad part, favorite part, or even make predictions.

Study 1

The following two weeks were spent pre-teaching vocabulary terms from the read aloud. Words were from the tier 2 selection of narrative texts (Bear, McKeown, & Kucan 2013), and the pretest. Tier 2 words (Beck et al.,2013) included words such as *precede*, *trespassing*, *retrospect, etc*. The pretest determined the words that students do not have prior knowledge on. I was looking for the majority of the class (95%) to either know the word completely or not know it at all. If a word was known by the majority of the class, I did not teach the word. This changed the direction of what words to use depending on the percentage (95%) of words the whole class knew. I orally said the word and asked students to record it on the "word" line. Then, students wrote the definition of the word on the "definition" line of the pretest. Students reported their confidence with their definition by circling a yes, maybe, or no. Furthermore, students that did not provide a definition were not be asked to circle yes, *maybe*, or *no*. I scored the pretest based on an understanding of zero or one. A score of zero implied that students had no understanding of the word and one meant that they knew the definition of the word.

During this two-week period, ten of the twenty words were taught using the pre-teach strategy while reading aloud from *Shiloh* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. These words were: *groveling, abandoned, thrusting, sickle, feeble, lard, commence, greedy, suspicious,* and *envy*. I presented the word in an artistic manner before we begin our read aloud. I enjoyed writing the words that I pre-taught in fun, colorful letters on an anchor chart. From here, I presented a printed-out visual to help students visualize the word with clipart. I began reading immediately after showing the word, providing the visual, giving a brief explanation, and writing the definition of the word. While reading, students were actively listening by raising their hand when the vocabulary word was read aloud. We

then stopped when we approached the vocabulary term where we had a brief explanation on it. I asked a series of questions to the entire class, such as: *What does this word mean? Why is this word important here? Is there a time where you have experienced this word?* Students answered a series of questions either through whole group or partner discussions.

The second part of data collection for this study incorporated the use of weekly quizzes. Table 1 shows how the weekly quizzes assessed each set of words. I assessed a week after we have completed a week's set of words, as shown in the table. It included five of the previous week's words. I said the word, had students write it, and provided a definition. I was able to compare across data collection tools at the end of the study using this sort of informal assessment. Throughout the week, I used observations and recorded these observations to anecdotal notes on behaviors such as attention, time-on-task, use of word, and discussions. The post-test included all of the words that the students learned through the interactive read aloud.

Table 1

Week	Teach	Assessment
1	Expectations	Pre-Assessment to measure initial learning
2	Expectations	Pre-Assessment to measure initial learning
3	Group A Words (5 words) with Pre-teach Strategy	None

4	Group B Words (5 words) with Pre-teach Strategy	Group A words from Week 3 (Pre-teach)
5	Group A Words (5 words) with Context Clues	Group B words from Week 4 (Pre-teach)
6	Group B Words (5 words) with Context Clues	Group A words from Week 5 (Context Clues)
7	None	Group B words from Week 6 (Context Clues)

Table 1 *A detailed description of when assessments were given to students*

Study 2

Immediately following study 1, I taught students how to use context clues. This study included mini lessons on how to use context clues before we used it in the read aloud, *Shiloh* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. Lessons included anchor charts that taught students how to "look in and around the word" (Serravallo, 2015, p. 314), as well as anchor charts that taught students how to "get to the root" of the word (Serravallo, 2015, p. 323). Students focused on how to look within a word's root (morphology) and how to use the surrounding text to determine the unknown word. Additionally, students practiced how to utilize context clues using the anchor chart with the children's book, *Sylvester and*

the Magic Pebble by William Steig before moving to our read aloud, *Shiloh* by Phyllis Reynolds.

Students learned ten different words to make a total of twenty words for this study. The words that were taught using context clues were: *snarl, hunch, bawl, wince, oblige, preach, enthusiasm, yank, antibiotics,* and *sympathy*. I used the pretest to determine the words students were not familiar with or not able to define. Before we read Shiloh, I displayed the words we were going to apply the context clues strategy to in a speech bubble. As we read, students raised their hand when they heard the word and we used an anchor chart to record the word and answer two questions, *What do you think the word means*? and *Why do you think that*? Students engaged in conversations with groups of four, partners, and whole-class.

Study 2 also included weekly quizzes. Table 1 shows how study 2 aligned with Method B and assessed a week after all five words had been taught. This weekly quiz asked students to write the word and definition from the read aloud. In addition to the weekly quiz, the posttest was administered at the end featuring all the words. I compared the students' understanding from the quizzes and final assessment. Similar to study 1, I continued to use observations and anecdotal notes with attention to behaviors and conversations.

Data Collection

This action-research study collected data through a pretest, posttest, and weekly vocabulary quizzes. The study began with the pretest. Students completed 20 questions by writing the definition of the word. The word was shown and the teacher said the word out-loud. The students then proceeded to write the definition of the word. If a student was

unsure or did not know the definition, they either left the word blank or wrote “I don’t know.”

The weekly quizzes were in a formative format that allowed the teacher to gather important data about word retention during the study. The weekly quiz was given five days after the five words had been taught. This happened on the following Friday that all five words had been taught from the previous week. Table 1 shows the breakdown of each weekly quiz in accordance to each set of words.

The posttest was given at the end of the action-research study. Students were asked to write each vocabulary word and its definition. Similar to the pretest, students were given the word and the teacher read it out loud. The students wrote the definition and it was graded on how close it was related to the definition provided during the study. If a student was unsure of the definition, they left it blank or wrote “I don’t know.”

Summary

This study worked to compare vocabulary strategies during an interactive read aloud. I collected data through a carefully developed pretest to determine vocabulary words that the majority of the group did not understand. The words determined from the pretest were assessed on the posttest to determine strategy effectiveness and retention. During each strategy implementation, additional quizzes were used as a formal assessment along the way.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to compare two vocabulary strategies to each other during an interactive read aloud. The vocabulary strategies focused on pre-teach with use of visuals and context clues. All 20 students in my classroom listened to the interactive read aloud, *Shiloh,* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, while learning vocabulary words through the two different strategies. At the start of the study, each student was assessed through a pretest on each vocabulary word whether or not they knew the definition of the word.

During this study, data were collected to evaluate their vocabulary understanding with each strategy. Data collection methods were thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3. The majority of the data collection consisted of a pretest, weekly quizzes, and a posttest. This chapter will now restate the research question that was investigated with attention to word selection and retention, and discuss findings with each vocabulary strategy. Additionally, the findings will be presented through an analytical comparison between the two vocabulary strategies.

Research Question

The research question that guided this study through the use of appropriate data collection tools was as follows:

When comparing two vocabulary strategies, context clues and pre-teach using visuals, during an interactive read aloud, which will have greater results?

Data were collected to investigate this action-research question further. A pretest, weekly quizzes, and a posttest were gathered as data points to communicate overall ideas

of each strategy and also pinpoint which strategy created higher results for this study. The results of these assessments will be compared through various charts to describe differences.

Word Selection Findings

Teacher discretion was used to identify the words that were going to be taught during this action-research study. Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013) describe the importance of using a tier system to determine the word choices. The vocabulary words that were chosen included all Tier 2 words. Tier 2 words are described as words that students do not typically hear in everyday conversation. In Figure 1, it shows the individual word data laid out with results in the pretest, weekly quizzes, and posttest. The black line indicates that the first ten words were part of the pre-teach strategy and the remaining ten words were taught with context clues. Some words were completely or nearly universally known; for example, 100% of the students were able to define the word *lard* and *yank* correctly. The exact percentages of each word show that 90% of students could correctly define lard and 85% of students could correctly define yank. There were also words that showed large increases in growth. Looking at the words: sickle, sympathy, and lard students gained a large amount of understanding from the pretest to the posttest. The word sickle showed results of only 5% of the students knew the definition on the pretest; however, the posttest shows that 70% of the students could retain and understand the true definition. On the contrary, there were also words that had little growth. Words like abandoned, greedy, and preach show little to no growth. In particular, the word greedy shows result that 60% of students understood the definition,

whereas the posttest showed the same results of 60%. After looking at these specific results based on individual words, larger conclusions from these collective data sets were drawn.

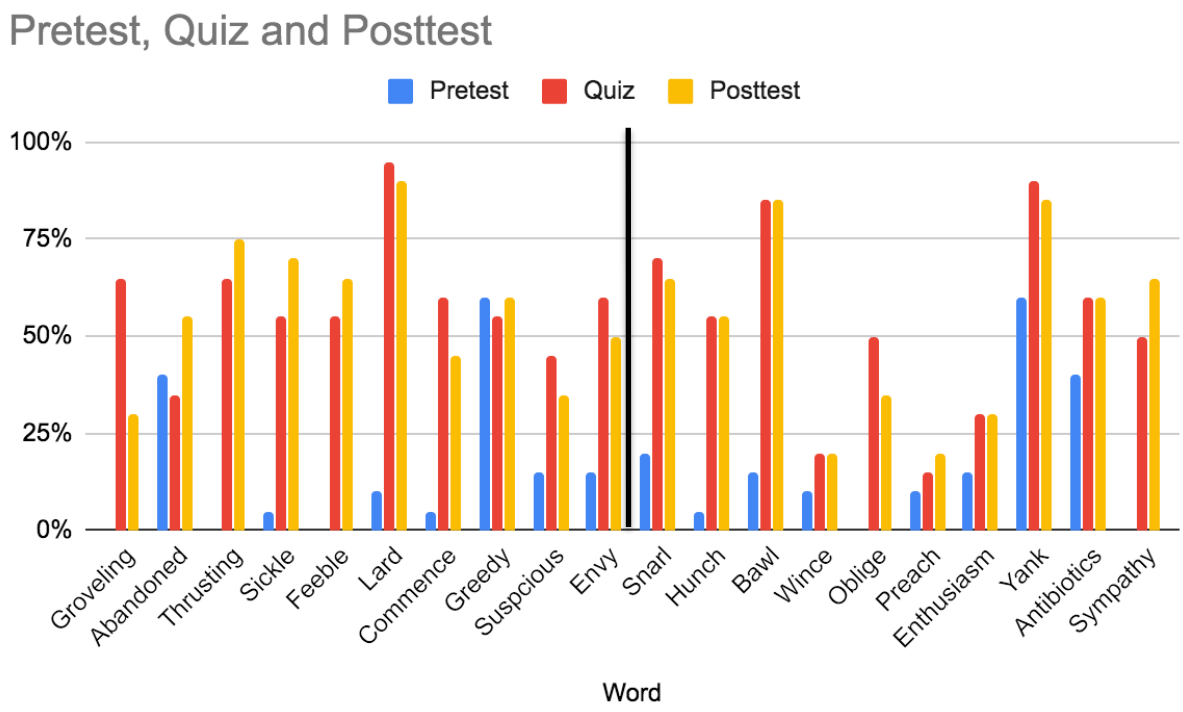

Figure 1 *Percentages of students with correct definitions per individual words on the pretest, quiz, and posttest*

Retention Findings

Retention plays an important role in this action-research study. This idea focuses on whether or not they were able to retain the vocabulary definition over time. The data were useful to measure the findings in retention. Figure 2 shows a comparison of retention results from the students' quiz results to the posttest results. Retention was defined as total words correct from quiz to posttest for both pre-teach and context clue strategies. Pre-teach retention averaged 94.59%, as students were able to carry over their

learning from the pre-teach quizzes to the posttest. Similarly, context clues showed that 98.04% of students were able to retain the words learned from the quiz to the posttest.

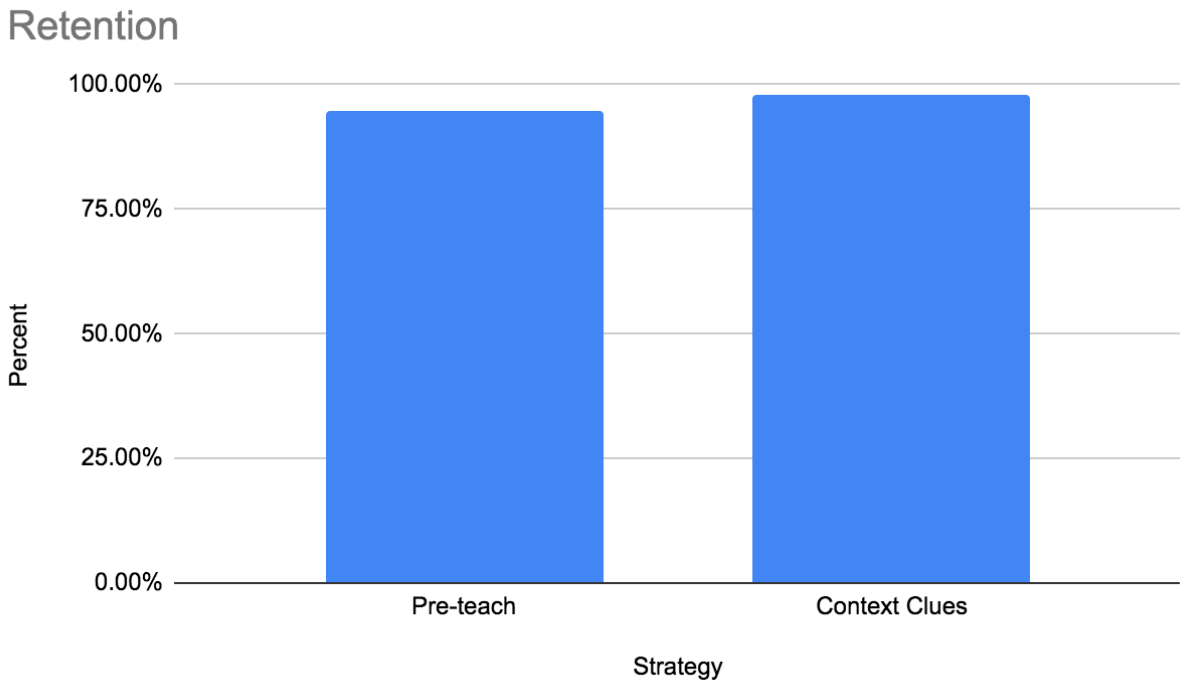

Figure 2 *Student retention average percentages from quizzes and posttest with comparison to pre-teach and context clues strategies.*

Comparison Analysis

Overall, it is recorded that students gained vocabulary knowledge over this study. Figure 7 aims to show the results of the pretest and posttest. The average percentage correct on the pretest was 17.5% and the average correct on the posttest was 53.8%. According to the posttest results in Figure 3, it shows that 55.5% of students were able to correctly define the pre-teach words and 52% of students were able to correctly define vocabulary words taught using context clues. This slight difference between scores from pre-teach and context clues is consistent with other data, which will be further discussed. Figure 4 displays the average correct per strategy on the weekly quizzes. These results were found by comparing the words correct on the pretest to the weekly quizzes when

tested on individual strategies. Figure 5 outlines the information gathered during the pre-teach study. On the pretest, the average percentage correct on pre-teach words was 13.5% while the quizzes showed an average of 57% correct. Figure 6 outlines the information gathered during the context clues study. On the pretest, the average percentage correct was 21.5% while the quizzes showed an average of 52.5% correct. In other words, it shows that growth was made for each strategy, but shows greater growth based on averages for pre-teach.

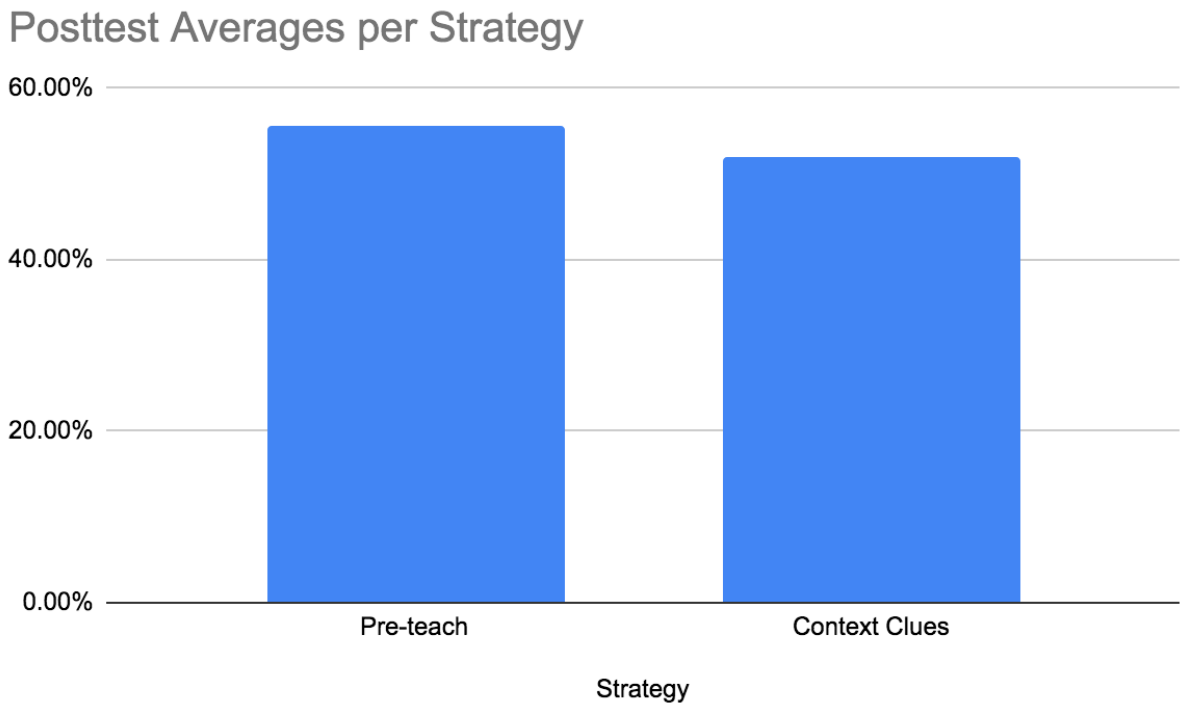

Figure 3 *Student posttest averages per strategy*

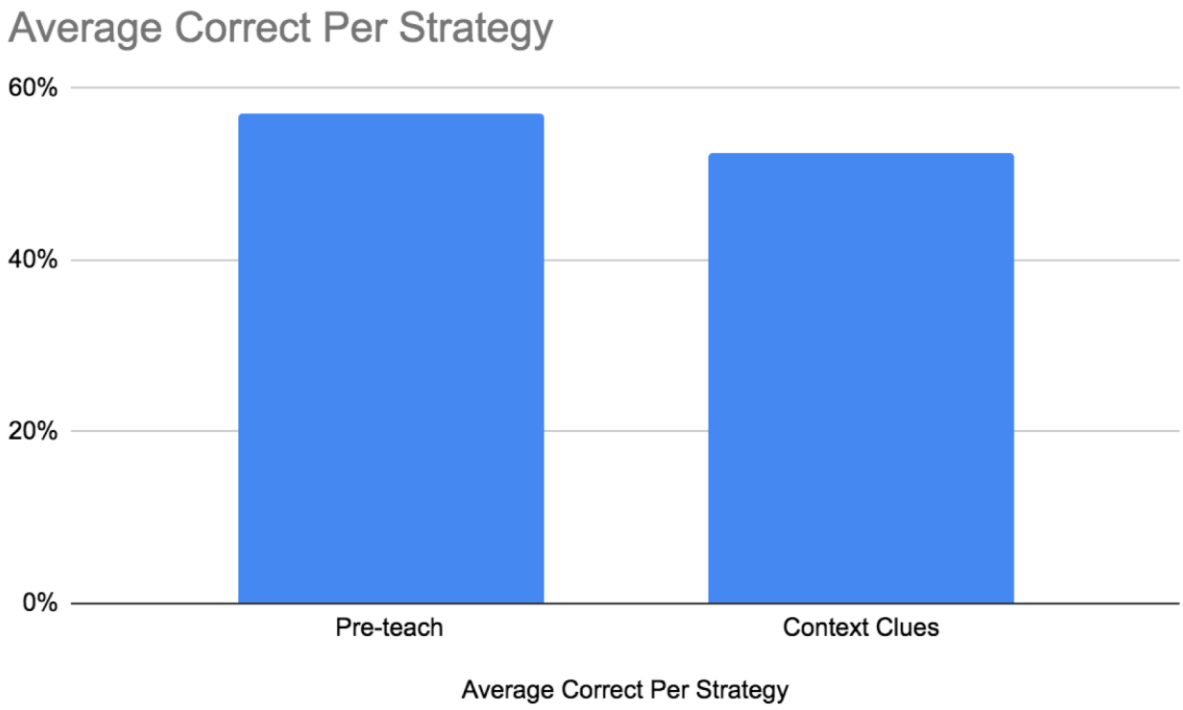

Figure 4 *Average words correct on quizzes during each vocabulary strategy study*

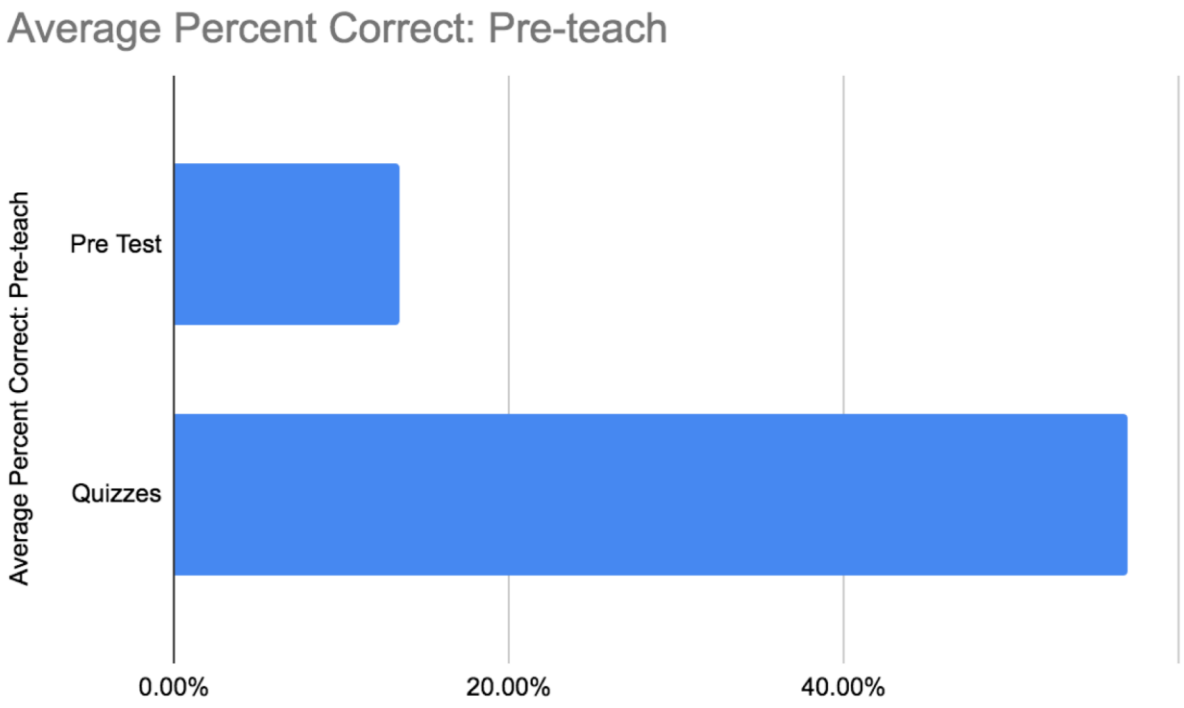

Figure 5 *Percentage correct on pre-teach words from the pretest to the average percentage correct on pre-teach quizzes*

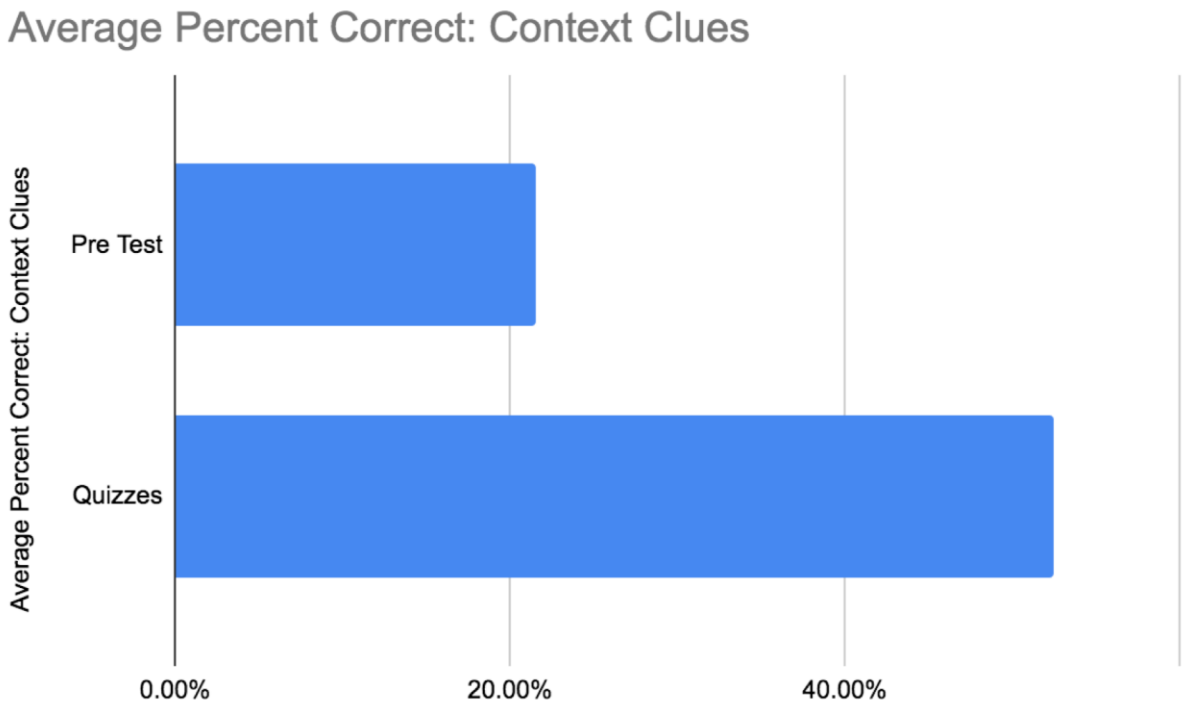

Figure 6 *Percentage correct on context clues words from the pretest to the average percentage correct on context clues quizzes*

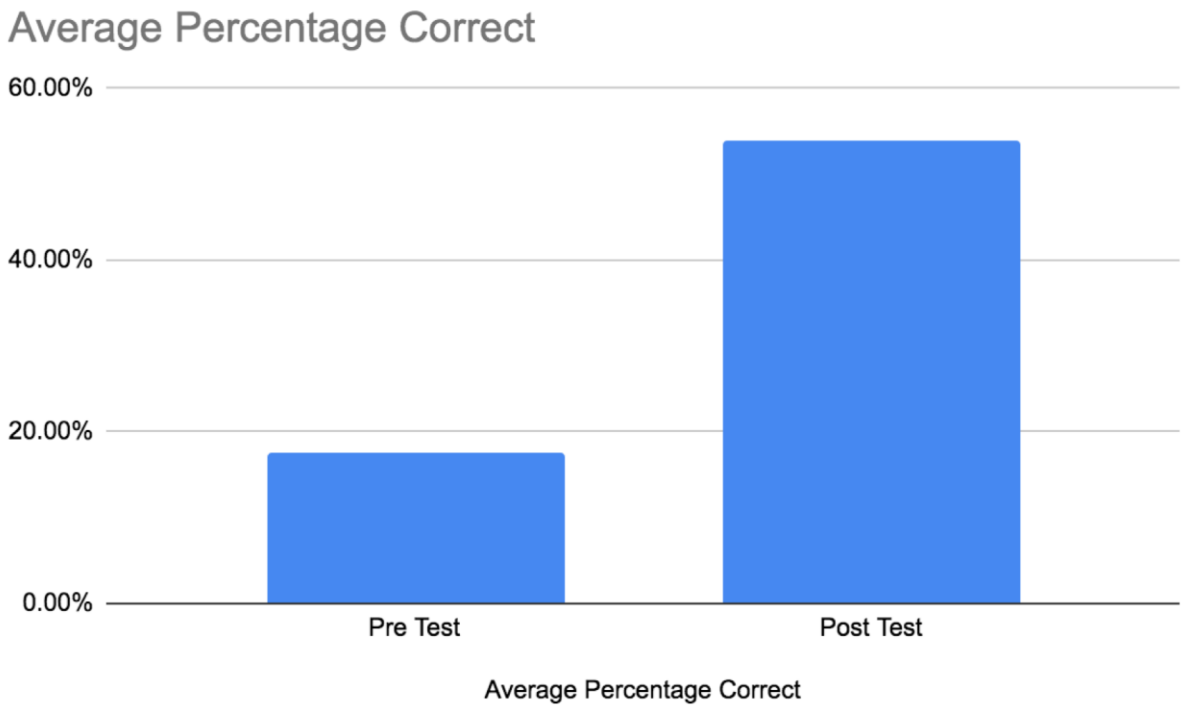

Figure 7 *Average correct on all vocabulary words on the pretest and posttest*

Table 2 shows the results of a paired-sample t-test, with final conclusions being drawn from a two-tailed p value. The means in Table 2 were calculated using the overall difference between the pre and posttests for both pre-teach and context clues. The means of the differences for pre-teach and context clues were 4.2 and 3.15, respectively. The p value (one-tailed) showed a value of 0.01635552, and the p value (two-tailed) showed a value of 0.03271103. Taking into account the design of the paired-sample t-test, two-tailed p value was used to interpret the difference between the two strategies. With a standard p value <0.05 assigned, the result of 0.03271103 was found to be statistically significant.

	Pre-teach Pre/Post Test Difference	Context Clues Pre/Post Test Difference
Mean	4.2	3.15
Observations	20	20
Hypothesized Mean difference	0	
df	19	
P (T<=t) one-tail	0.01635552	
P (T<=t) two-tail	0.03271103*	

Table 2 *Pre-teach and Context Clues paired samples t-test results*

Individualized Student Findings

At the beginning of the study, a pretest was administered to all students. This served as baseline data to gather the initial knowledge that the students had. Figure 8 paints a picture of the data per student in the study while Figure 9 shows the summative growth from the pretest to the posttest. Figure 10 includes weekly quiz results from

individual students. Although there are some inconsistencies, overall, the data shows growth from the initial pretest to each quiz and the following posttest. Another observation that stems from Figure 8 is that some quizzes showed higher results than other quizzes. Quiz 2 displays higher results for individual students compared to other quizzes.

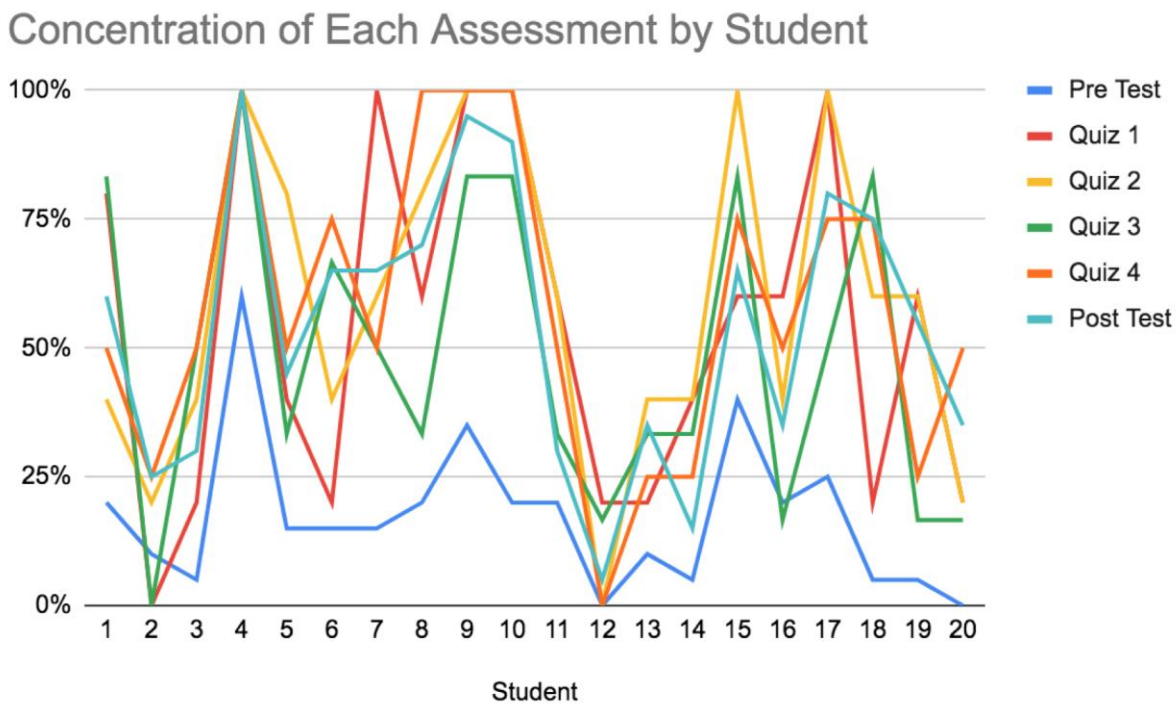

Figure 8 *Percentage correct on each assessment per student*

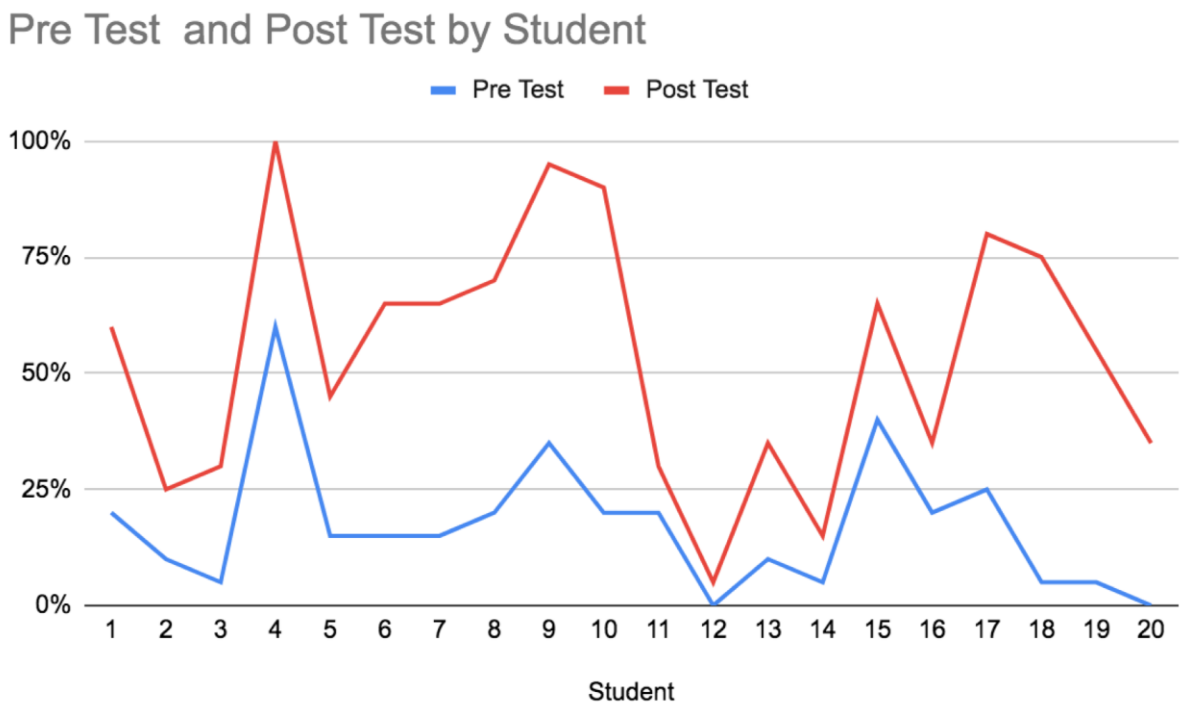

Figure 9 *Percentage correct on the pretest and posttest per student*

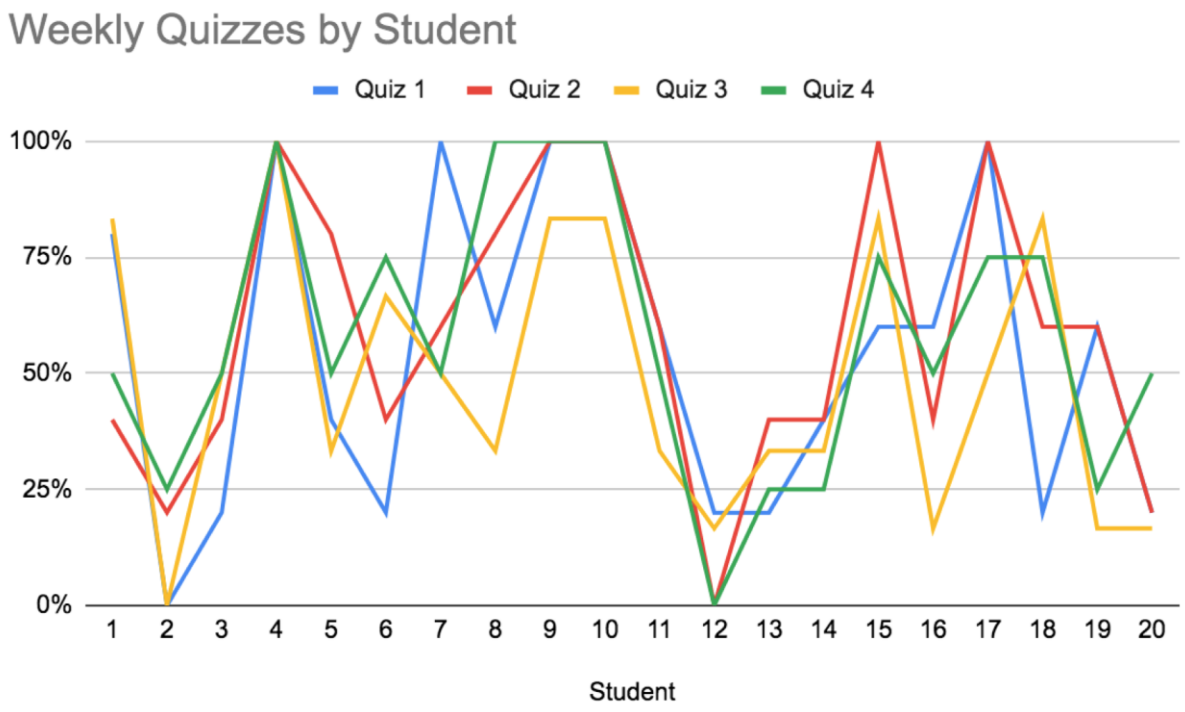

Figure 10 *Percentage correct on each weekly quiz*

Summary

Results collected through the pretest, weekly quizzes, and the posttest were presented in this chapter. Each of the results obtained from these assessments analyzed various trends that were seen. Some of the trends seen were the increase, decrease, or no change in the percentage of students that got individual words correct. These results also looked at retention success and the ability for students to recall certain words used with each strategy. Lastly, this chapter looked closely at comparing pre-teach and context clues vocabulary strategies against one another to answer the research question. These results will be further discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Teachers often share a common goal of expanding their students' oral and written vocabulary language. This action-research study focused on teaching students' vocabulary through pre-teach with visuals and context clues. This study was completed in a fourth-grade classroom with 20 students. The research question that guided this research was: *When comparing two vocabulary strategies, context clues and pre-teach using visuals, during an interactive read aloud, which will have greater results?* Aforementioned above, it described that using vocabulary strategies, such as pre-teach and context clues, will indeed increase students' vocabulary understanding. This chapter will now explore the interpretation of results, discuss limitations that were present and implications that are important, and include future research ideas.

Interpretation of Results

Fourth-grade students participated in a six-week study that investigated the outcomes of using two vocabulary strategies: pre-teach and context clues. Results were compared through data collection of a pretest, weekly quizzes, and a posttest over five-weeks of time. Analysis of this data showed that students made growth from the pretest to the posttest indicating the using vocabulary strategies with students can increase their knowledge of unknown words.

The T-test showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the two vocabulary strategies. It showed that students had higher results from the pre-teach

with visuals compared to the context clues. The T-test also refutes my hypothesis. My hypothesis was that context clues would perform higher. The results from both strategies show clearly that retention was excellent. These numbers, as shown on Figure 2, are nearly at 100% retention from the quiz to the posttest on each strategy. Generally, I can say that my students benefited tremendously from taking the time during the interactive read-aloud to teach vocabulary words using two different strategies. Figure 9 displays a line graph of the pretest and posttest results. By looking at this, the pretest shows the need to teach vocabulary words; furthermore, the posttest shows that instruction was successful with a high increase in results from pretest to posttest.

While the participants as a whole demonstrated growth, individual students had varied amounts of growth. Student 12 had 5% growth and student 2 had 15% growth from the pretest to the posttest. Students 2 and 12 are identified with a specific learning disability. It seems apparent that the instruction was either not helpful enough, or that they had trouble with transferring the words onto the quizzes. Had I maybe had them orally describe the definitions to me there could possibly have been different results. Instead, their data shows little growth compared to other students.

Although both strategies showed a large success rate overall, the pre-teach strategy was ultimately the more effective method. The data collected consistently showed success with pre-teach. From the pretest to posttest, the growth in the average correct was 55.5% for pre-teach and 52% for context clues. Additionally, when comparing the pretest to the weekly quizzes, there was a greater increase in scores on the vocabulary quizzes during the pre-teach instructional period than during the context clues instructional period. The average percent correct for pre-teach on the pretest was 13.5%

and increased to 57% correct on the weekly pre-teach quizzes. The average percent correct for context clues on the pretest was 21.5% and the quizzes showed 52.2% correct.

The data that provided the most relevance to the research question came from the pretest to the posttest percentage correct. Students of the study as a whole made improvements from the pretest to the posttest as a result of receiving vocabulary instruction with both strategies. The additional data collected and analyzed also shows that these students in the study had higher percentage correct using the pre-teach words. Overall, the pretest and posttest demonstrate a positive overall effect on fourth-grade vocabulary understanding.

Implications

One of the important conclusions that were drawn from the results in Chapter 4 showed that students benefited from either strategy. This idea shows that teachers can choose whether to use either context clues or pre-teaching strategies to teach vocabulary during read alouds depending on what their time and situation allow. I picture that teachers choose freely from either strategy depending on the amount of time available. Having the flexibility to use either strategy will grow students' vocabulary understanding regardless.

Secondly, students need more time to use context clues. Students of this study were given two weeks to learn and effectively use context clues. This is not an effective way to expect much growth to happen when students are just getting familiar with analyzing unknown words to identify the definition. My observation notes described that students were uneasy about participating. This was shown through less amounts of sharing with the whole group and students that would tell their partner they were unsure

what the word meant. When expecting students to make greater growth, they have to have more practice with the strategy.

Limitations

The first limitation is that this study has a low sample size of students. The 20 students that participated in this study were considered a small number of participants for action research. Additionally, these 20 students were students in my classroom and did not incorporate random sampling.

A second limitation is the reliability of the assessment grading practices. As the teacher-researcher, I used a grading rubric to consider students' responses; however, it was difficult to adhere when students had similar understandings to what was taught in class. This affects the reliability of the assessment choices used as it was more subjective than objective. Because of these two limitations previously mentioned, the study is not generalizable. This means that the study cannot be interpreted in the context of the general population. This is due to the fact that the general population does not fit the same population that was used in this study.

Future Research

Future research using these vocabulary strategies could explore the impact on reading comprehension. As stated in Chapter 2: Literature, it mentioned the five pillars to developing strong readers and both reading comprehension and vocabulary were listed. While this study explored effective vocabulary strategies against one another, further research could include the use of reading comprehension while using the vocabulary strategies. By adding the reading comprehension component, teachers would be able to

see the benefits of teaching vocabulary words and its effects on comprehension understandings.

Future research could work to compare effective vocabulary strategies that should be used with English Learners (EL). This study included one student who was identified as English Learners. While this is also a student with a learning disability, it is difficult to determine what vocabulary strategy would aid in vocabulary development. By adding in a population of English Learners, teachers would be able to further investigate effective vocabulary strategies with emphasis on certain populations.

Future research could incorporate reliable grading practices to refrain from subjective grading. One idea that could be used is multiple choice definitions per each word. This would provide a more objective measurement of right and wrong for each vocabulary word. This also eliminates grading error.

Additionally, future research could include a larger sample size with students and vocabulary words. As previously stated in the limitation paragraph, I mentioned that a core limitation to this study was that the student sample size was small and not randomized since I was the teacher to the participants. Future research could also include a larger sample size of vocabulary words.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that using either context clues or pre-teach vocabulary strategy will benefit students' vocabulary toolbox. Statistical data from the assessments used show that both strategies show success and improvement in understanding vocabulary. Statistical data also shows that pre-teach was more successful with the students used in this study. The use of pre-teach and context clues serves as

strategies to help students determine the meanings of unknown words. Students received instruction in both strategies and were able to grow their word knowledge.

As a reading teacher, my hope is to help my students see the importance of figuring out unknown words and find joy in learning new vocabulary word definitions. In order to do this, I need to continue to explore vocabulary strategies to help students find success as they navigate the unknown word world.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

PRETEST AND POSTTEST SAMPLE

Name _____

1. Word: Groveling
Definition _____

2. Word: Abandoned
Definition _____

3. Word: Thrusting
Definition _____

4. Word: Sickle
Definition _____

5. Word: Feeble
Definition _____

6. Word: Lard
Definition _____

7. Word: Commence
Definition _____

8. Word: Greedy
Definition _____

9. Word: Suspicious
Definition _____

10. Word: Envy
Definition _____

11. Word: Snarl
Definition _____

12. Word: Hunch
Definition _____

13. Word: Bawl
Definition _____

14. Word: Wince
Definition _____

15. Word: Oblige
Definition _____

16. Word: Preach
Definition _____

17. Word: Enthusiasm
Definition _____

18. Word: Yank
Definition _____

19. Word: Antibiotics
Definition _____

Appendix B

WEEKLY QUIZZES SAMPLE

1. Word
Definition _____

2. Word
Definition _____

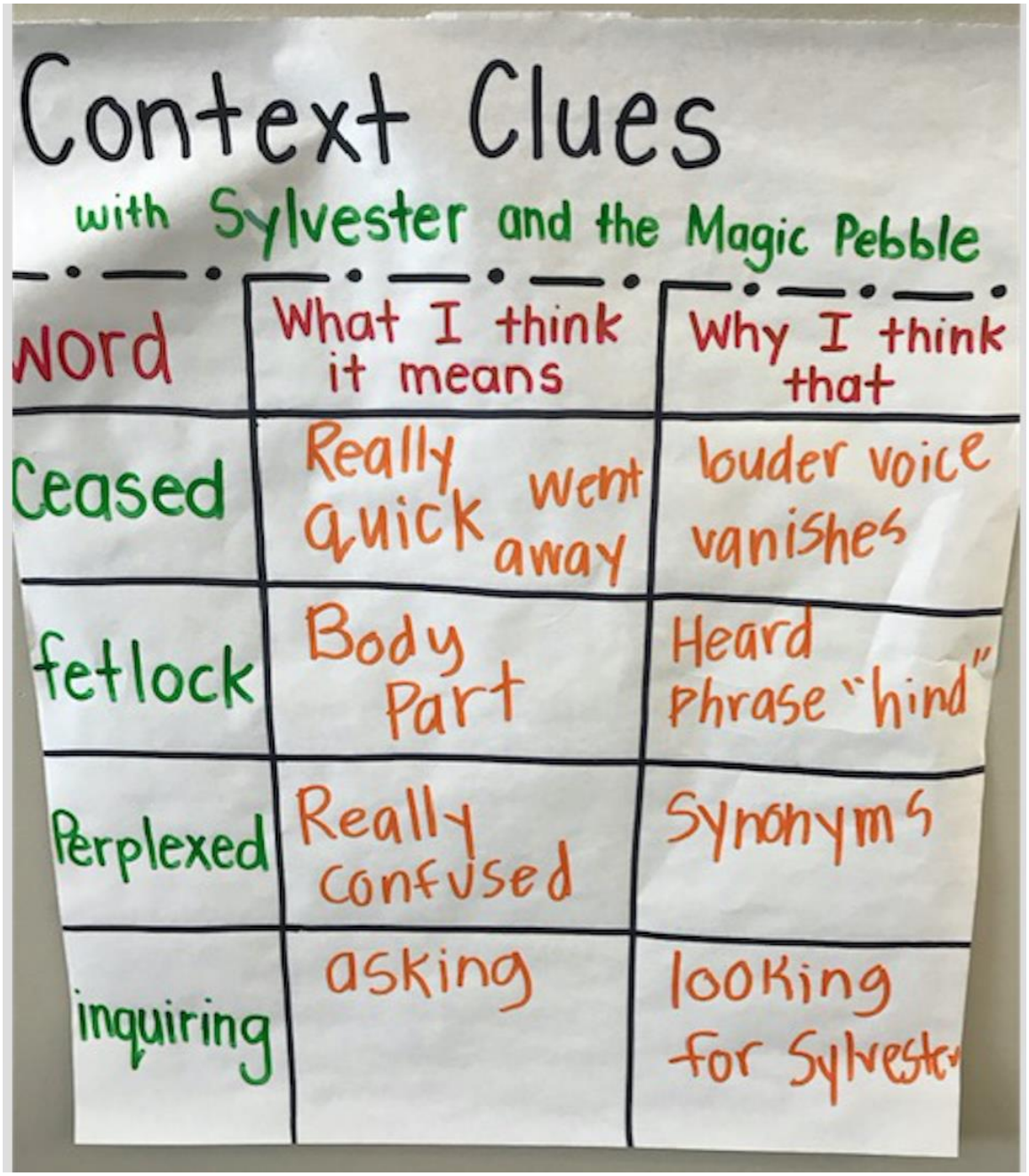
3. Word
Definition _____

4. Word
Definition _____

5. Word
Definition _____

Appendix C

SYLVESTER AND THE MAGIC PEBBLE CONTEXT CLUES


Context Clues
with Sylvester and the Magic Pebble
Word
What I think it means
Why I think that
Ceased
Really quick
went away
louder voice
vanishes
fetlock
Body Part
Heard phrase "hind"
Perplexed
Really confused
Synonyms
inquiring
asking
looking for Sylvester

Appendix D

PRE-TEACH WITH VISUALS ANCHOR CHART


Post-it
30
3M
Shiloh Voca
groveling
Acting in a way to get a favor
Lard
animal fat
thrusting
Pushing
very viole
Feeble
Extremely weak
Envy
ealous of
omeone else
ed
d
d
drea
Sick
Farm
with a
Suspicious
cautious about
trusting someone
or something.
commence
to begin
START
greedy-
intense
selfish
desire