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Vocabulary Development in Preschool English Language Learners

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Table of Contents

Abstract

The purpose of this actions research project was to determine what the impact of using pictures when teaching vocabulary would have on preschool English Language Learners (ELLs). Participants were four and five-year-olds in a public preschool. Quantitative data was taken using Creative Curriculum GOLD to collect observations. Two checkpoints were used for this research. The fall checkpoint was collected in October. The Winter checkpoint was collected in February. Students were shown pictures of new vocabulary words from a story along with pictures in the book. The results of this study suggest that there was a small amount of growth in the students that used pictures to learn new vocabulary words.

Vocabulary Development in Preschool English Language Learners

Many teachers today will be faced with the challenge of teaching a diverse population of students. With this diverse population comes the opportunity to teach English language learners (ELLs). There are more than 3,000 million ELLs in the nation's school system, and that number is expected to rise. ELLs are students that are unable to communicate or learn in English. They can be students that speak any language other than English. These students are entering kindergarten less prepared than their English speaking peers. Developing vocabulary is one way to help ELLs catch up to their peers.

Vocabulary is a critical aspect of learning the English language. Without a strong vocabulary foundation, many aspects of speaking will be impaired. For the purpose of this project, the research will focus on the development of vocabulary in preschool age children. Many studies have been done on how to best help students learn English, but few focus on preschool students. The research literature does agree that English vocabulary knowledge needs to be enhanced. With this in mind teachers need to be aware of how a second language is acquired.

There has been a significant amount of research done on how students acquire a second language. There are five stages ELLs will go through. Those five stages include preproduction, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency. The rate at which students go through the five stages varies among students. It is essential that teachers know what stage the student is in; to best help them learn English. This will allow the teacher to meet the students' needs and provide adequate accommodations.

What the researcher is seeking to determine is if the use of pictures will help preschool children learn new vocabulary. "As compared to their English-speaking peers, ELLs are exposed to English vocabulary at a later age and are less likely to be exposed to extensive English

oral language experiences at home, thus negatively affecting their vocabulary development" (August & Shanahan, 2010, p. 344). Insufficient vocabulary may lead to academic struggles later in school. This is why teachers need to provide a strong vocabulary foundation. Vocabulary development is connected to the amount and quality of language that children hear. Students that have a large vocabulary will have an easier time learning to read due to these words already being part of their oral vocabulary. One approach to addressing the diverse needs of ELLs is through the implementation of explicit vocabulary instruction in the classroom with the use of pictures.

Review of the Literature

Importance of vocabulary instruction

Vocabulary is crucial to teaching the English language. Communication will be difficult for students who lack sufficient vocabulary. The importance of meeting the needs of ELLs in preschool is imperative. Many ELLs enter preschool with little to no English. This will be their first experience with the English language. Children whose first language is not English need to hear and participate in the English language in order to develop ideas on how language works.

Without a strong vocabulary foundation, oral and receptive language may be delayed. There is a strong relationship between both first and second language oral competence and English language arts achievement from toddlerhood to the end of 2nd grade. Yet estimates indicated that most ELLs have difficulty with English and have proficiency levels below those of children of similar socioeconomic status whose first language is English. The effects of oral language strength extends beyond school achievement to influence children's ability to control their behavior, to form rewarding social connection

to others, and to successfully negotiate the English-speaking everyday world, both inside

and outside of school. (Roberts, 2017, p. 35)

Reading comprehension can also be affected by poor vocabulary. Children need to know a wide

range of words to understand the texts they will encounter in school. "Many ELLs walk into the

classroom with limited English language backgrounds and find that vocabulary is their most

challenging encounter in attempting to access information from the classroom texts" (August,

Carlo & Snow, 2005, p. 52).

   Five stages of language acquisition. According to Haynes (2005) there are five stages

of second language acquisition. The first stage is preproduction. This is when students are

learning new words. "In a nonverbal period, children listen to and study a new language, trying

to understand which rules apply. As they gain more competence in English, they may rehearse

the English language. Often students will repeat words, but they are not producing language"

(Cheatham, 2010, p. 19). This is a time when it is helpful to pair a student with another that

speaks the same language. The second stage is early production, which lasts approximately six

months. During this stage, ELLs acquire the understanding of up to 1,000 words. During this

stage, students will start to use one or two-word phrases. The third stage is speech emergence.

By this time ELLs with have approximately 3,000 words. Students may start to ask simple ques-

tions, but they may not be grammatically correct. They are gaining greater comprehension and

beginning to read and write. Students may engage in short conversations with peers. The fourth

stage is intermediate fluency. This stage can last up to a year. By this time, the ELLs will have

up to 6,000 words. Speech becomes more complex, and students begin thinking in the second

language. The final stage is advanced fluency. This stage can last two years or longer. In this

stage, students will be able to perform in content area learning.

Oral Vocabulary. There is evidence that disadvantages in oral language at preschool age have extensive and long-lasting effects on a child's future development. "Vocabulary knowledge, in particular, has been shown to play a significant role in academic achievement for both monolingual populations and ELLs" (Bowers, 2011, p. 222). Sizes of both expressive and receptive vocabulary are significantly related to later reading development. "Just as speakers of a first language must engage in frequent, meaning-centered interactions with speakers of that language, so should ELLs. The central element of all instruction for ELLs should be to make rich language comprehensible" (García, 2003, p. 33). García (2003) explained that teachers should accompany oral explanations and teacher read alouds with visuals, gestures, and dramatization to illustrate key concepts and vocabulary.

Children need to be successful at the concrete level of oral language before they can begin applying this knowledge to higher levels of thinking. "The concrete level of oral language includes such tasks as labeling, describing, and word recall, while the higher level skills include activities such as identifying similarities and differences, predicting, and explaining" (Massey, 2004, p. 228). "It is thought that a critical window of opportunity for the development of oral language exists during the preschool years and research has shown that the pace of oral language acquisition slows after this age" (Pullen & Justice, 2003, p. 95). "Assessment of receptive and expressive vocabulary knowledge is a way to measure the concrete level of oral language for preschool children" (Coppola, 2005, p. 20).

Rapid growth of ELLs in School.

There has been rapid growth in the number of ELLs in the United States. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in the fall of 2015, there were 4.8 million ELL students enrolled in school compared to 3.8 million in the fall of 2000. Many of those students

were in the lower grades. This represents ten percent of the K-12 population.   "ELLs are the

fastest-growing student population in the country, growing 60% in the last decade, as compared

with 7% growth of the general student population. Nearly 60% of ELLs nationwide are from

low-income families in which parents have "disproportionately" limited levels of education"

(Breiseth, 2015, par. 1). Because of the large growth of ELLs, their long-term educational ac-

quirement is a compelling concern for educators at all levels. "The fact that the nation's teachers

are and will increasingly encounter a diverse range of learners requires that every teacher has

sufficient breadth and depth of knowledge and range of skills to be able to meet the unique needs

of all students, including those who struggle with English" (Samson & Collins, 2012, p. 4).

The nations young child (0-8) ELL population is also on the rise at 32 percent according

to the Migration Policy Institute. Much of the research suggests that there are benefits of bilin-

gualism. "Home-language skills and experiences with different cultures represents important as-

sets for ELLs' development" (Park, Toole, & Katsiaficas, 2017, p. 1). Young ELLs will benefit

from high-quality pre-kindergarten. "However, ELLs across the United States are enrolling in

pre-Kindergarten programs at lower rates than their non-ELL peers. As the young ELL popula-

tion grows, policies need to safeguard that all young children are able to build a strong founda-

tion for future success" (Park, Toole, & Katsiaficas, 2017, p. 1).

Insufficient vocabulary knowledge is a critical problem

Strong vocabulary skills is a significant predictor of later success in academic skills.

Teachers need to lay a strong vocabulary foundation in preschool and early elementary to help

children succeed in later years. "Children who acquire large vocabularies in their early years are

better prepared for literacy than those children with poor vocabularies" (Coppola, 2005, p.

19). Heart and Risley (2003) estimated that the average child from a professional family would

be exposed to an accumulated experience of about 42 million words compared to 13 million words for the child from a low-income family. To catch up, children with less vocabulary will need to gain several hundred words in addition to what they would otherwise learn. For ELLs, this number would be even greater. "The average 3-year-old English speaker knows about 1,000 root words, the average kindergartener knows about 3,000 root words, and the average 2nd grader knows about 5,000-6,000. If children enter kindergarten as ELLs, they are likely to have a 2,000-3,000 word gap" (Roberts, 2017, p. 96). ELL kindergarteners need a rate of English vocabulary learning at least double of a typical native English speaker to close the gap. "Vocabulary knowledge beginning in the preschool years is recognized to have a strong predictive relationship to reading comprehension" (Catts, Adolf, & Wismer, 2006, p. 220). For those students who have limited or no English, vocabulary difficulties can be significantly enhanced.

There is an increasing need for more studies that examine vocabulary growth in young ELLs. "There also needs to be considerations for factors that influence vocabulary growth and how vocabulary growth influences literacy achievement" (Jackson, Schatschneider, & Leacox, 2014, p. 42). "In one study done by Hammer et al. (2007) it was found that early exposure to English was not a factor in preschool vocabulary growth. In another study done by Hammer et al. (2011) it was found that children demonstrated an increased rate of growth of their vocabulary during their two years of attendance in a preschool Head Start program" (Jackson, Schatschneider, & Leacox, 2014, p. 48).   Thus, there is a need for additional studies, given the importance of vocabulary knowledge to support reading and academic achievement.

Challenges

There are many challenges to teaching ELLs. Teachers need to recognize that these students have unique learning needs. Unfortunately, many teachers do not have the training to

know how to best teach students who speak a different language. Washburn wrote an article about a group of practicum students who were observing in a middle school with a large population of ELLs; "When asked by their professor what the teachers did to help support these students the practicum students reported that many of the teachers did not do anything differently for them. Another one stated that the teacher tried, but they did not know how to help. Teachers need to learn how to work with this diverse population of students" (Washburn, 2008, p. 248). "Many teachers of ELLs are increasingly concerned about being held accountable for their students' progress as measured by a standardized test. Clearly, teachers of ELLs need the appropriate training to be able to meet their students' language and learning needs and to facilitate academic growth, yet most teachers lack this training" (Samson & Collins, 2012, p. 11). Many teacher training programs do not sufficiently train teachers to address ELL's needs. They do not stress teaching instructional approaches. Teachers learn the content in their specific area, but do not talk about the divers language needs of students.

Language shock. Language shock is when a student is in a classroom and does not understand the lesson being taught because it is in a language that is foreign to them. This can lead to students becoming frustrated and angry Other students may call them stupid or dumb. It could be a benefit, for other students, to have the opportunity to learn more about heir ELL classmates. If students are given the chance to better understand their classmates, they may be more accepting of them. Teachers need to be aware of this and take precautions to help students overcome language shock. "Teachers need to have an awareness and knowledge of language, knowing the language needs of English Language Learners (ELLs), and be able to appropriately scaffold their needs to help them develop academic proficiency in English" (Dost, 2016, p. 31). Teachers need to make students feel welcome in the classroom and feel like they belong. It is

part of the educators' job to make all students, no matter their background, feel safe and included in the classroom. They need to have a strategy in place to ensure that students are comprehending most of what is happening in the classroom.

Belonging. Students who speak a different language may feel as if they do not belong in the classroom. In order for students to learn, it is essential that they feel a sense of belonging. It is the teachers responsibility to help students become comfortable in their surroundings. Make sure they know the important places in the school. This could include bathrooms, the office area, lunchroom, guidance office and any rooms where they may attend specials, like physical education or music. They could be assigned to another student to show them around and introduce them to others in the school and community. "They need to feel they are unique, are recognized as themselves, and belong socially and have the rights and duties of membership in a given society. In middle schools, some ways we might develop this feeling are through the advisory program, teaming, and exploratory curriculum" (Washburn, 2008, p. 248). "In addition to language acquisition, ELLs are asked to connect their cultures, backgrounds, and experience with those of their new environment in order to achieve academic success" (Samson & Collins, 2012, p. 13). Teachers need to work hard to ensure that all of their students feel a sense of acceptance in their classroom community. When all students feel included, and like they are understood, the whole class benefits.

Comprehension. Many ELLs feel frustrated because they do not understand what is going on in the classroom. It needs to be a priority to find out what students already know. If teachers have students that do not want to speak, or may not be ready to speak, the teacher can ask them to point to objects identified by the other students, helping as needed. "A teacher should make sure his/her body language is visible and noticed by the ELLs as being identical to

what the teachers are talking about. The teachers should say everything at least three of several ways, such as through speech, written words, drawings, and diagrams on the board, photos, and real-life objects" (Washburn, 2008, p. 247).

One way to more fully engage ELLs in the classroom is through teacher-student interactions. If they consider various response options teachers may elicit more from less proficient students. This will help develop their language proficiency. Some ways to help is to be certain questions are clearly understood. Teachers may need to rephrase their questions. They also need to use appropriate wait time. This allows the student time to form their answer. "In addition, while first-language learning is largely motivated by a child's intrinsic desire to socialize, second-language learning often needs more extrinsic influence" (Mohr, 2015, section 1, paragraph 4).

Strategies

Given the growing number of ELLs in American schools, it is particularly important to investigate instructional effectiveness for children from a variety of linguistic backgrounds. **"**The goal of vocabulary instruction is to provide students with an understanding of the meaning and use of words so they can comprehend what they are reading and communicate effectively" (Kosanovich, 2005, p. 5). ELLs may not know many of the necessary words of children's early vocabulary. According to many researchers, they will need explicit teaching of vocabulary words. Learning of vocabulary for English language learners can be divided into five stages: (1) The word is unknown; (2) The word sounds familiar to the child, but the meaning is not known; (3) The child can translate the word into his or her native language; (4) The child is able to use

the word correctly in a sentence; and (5) The child understands the meaning of the word in different contexts and can use it correctly in various contexts both grammatically and semantically (Gass & Selinker, 2008).

Frequency of exposure to targeted vocabulary words. Many researchers have found that when children are exposed to target vocabulary words at a high frequency the likelihood that children will understand and remember the new words increases. In a multiple study research design, Biemiller and Boote (2006) found that "repeated reading of a storybook resulted in greater average gains in word knowledge by young children. The researchers found that students made an average gain of 12% compared with the control group (children who only heard the story read once), as measured by a vocabulary test that assessed the meaning of words within context" (Butler et al., 2010, p. 5). "Storybooks provide rich language not often heard in everyday speech, and they offer teachers meaningful context in which to discuss new words" (Silverman, 2007, p. 367).

One approach to target vocabulary words is through dialogic reading. According to Flynn (2011) dialogic reading is a form of shared reading between teachers and students. Dialogic reading is done with an individual or small group of students. Students are encouraged to engage with the book. When the book is first introduced the teacher shows the cover of the book and the illustrations. The students and teacher discuss what they see. During the first reading, the teacher reads the book without asking any questions. The second time reading vocabulary words are introduced. "Wh" questions are asking during this reading. This is the time when the teacher encourages students to use the new vocabulary words. During the third reading, the teacher asks more open-ended questions and expand on the students' responses. This process is

repeated for as long as it holds the students' interests. The process of dialogic reading helps with student engagement and the learning of vocabulary words.

Explicit instruction of targeted vocabulary words. "Effective vocabulary instruction requires educators to explicitly provide rich, robust opportunities for students to learn words, related concepts, and their meanings" (Butler et al., 2010, p. 5). Explicit instruction in vocabulary is defined as explaining words, defining words, teaching word labels, and discussing words and ideas in various contexts (Hindman & Wasik, 2011, p. 352). In a study of scientific vocabulary, in 37 socially and economically diverse preschool children attending an urban childcare center, Leung (2008) found that children had higher expressive vocabulary scores following an intervention that consisted of the reading of informational picture books and hands-on activities where students had the opportunity to use the vocabulary introduced in the story.

Lipsky (2013) stated the following instructional strategies that are effective for expanded vocabulary instruction: questioning, expansions, recasts, intentional teaching of word meaning, fast mapping, modeling/illustrating, provide opportunities for word use, purposeful exposure to new words, define words, and discussing the written form of words. Questioning is when a teacher asks a child to say a word or define a word. Expansions are when an adult restates and then completes a child utterance to add meaning. During recasts, an adult replies to a child's utterance maintaining meaning but changing a component of the sentence, incorporating elements that are slightly above the child's language level. To intentionally teach word meaning an adult uses a variety of direct teaching strategies. Modeling or illustrating the use of words happens when the teacher models how the word is used in context. When the teachers provide opportunities for students to use newly learned words in a variety of contexts, the adult will provide multi-

ple opportunities for the child to use the newly learned words (e.g., art activities, inquiry pro-

jects, concept mapping, and retell stories). When the teacher provides purposeful exposure to

new words, they use storybook reading, teachers' use of words in context, and multimedia

presentation that provides the label or meaning of a word. Defining words asks a child to define

a word, or provide a definition of a word in context (e.g., while exploring objects in the science

center the teacher holds up a pine cone and says, "this is a pine cone, it grows on a pine tree and

releases seeds when it opens").

      Questioning and language engagement. Questioning and language engagement boost

students' word knowledge. "Children are more likely to learn the meaning of the new words

when teachers highlight targeted vocabulary through questioning or comments" (Ard & Beverly,

2004, p. 18). "Researcher-developed 'storybooks' were used to introduce nonsense words to

children. The researchers found that children's understanding and memory of the 'words' in-

creased when teachers asked questions and made comments clarifying the meaning of the new

words" (Ard & Beverly, 2004, p. 19). Teachers need to be intentional when asking questions to

ELL students. They need to be aware of how they are asking the questions so that all students

understand and learn.

      A study was done by Connor, Morrison, and Slominski (2006) on the language interac-

tion between teachers and students during typical preschool emergent literacy activities such as

alphabet recognition, letter-word association, and vocabulary games they found "a substantial

variance in time spent on emergent literacy activities (from four to 90 minutes; from half-day to

full-day sessions; and from two to five days per week). They also found that classrooms ranged

from language-centered environments (where children were immersed in oral language, reading,

and writing experiences) to environments where children engaged in predominantly non-literacy

learning activities. An interesting related finding was that children experience very different learning opportunities even when they are classmates in the same learning environment. This suggests the importance of considering background knowledge and experience on learning out-comes" (Connor, Morrison, & Slominski, 2006, p. 682). Conversations and extended interactions is a great way to help develop language in young ELLs. "Responsiveness establishes the positive emotional and relationship conditions for language growth. Expanding and elaborating on what children say and encouraging them to do the same is a mechanism for language growth" (Roberts, 2017, p. 44).

How to overcome barriers

Often ELLs will come to school with different traditions and cultures than most of the other students in their classroom. These students need to not only overcome the language barrier but differences in traditions and cultures as well. Helfrich and Bean (2011) explain four barriers that need to be overcome to help ELLs. The first barrier is that teachers may not understand the role of literacy development or the importance of literacy and education in diverse cultures.   The second barrier is that teachers may struggle to meet the literacy needs of all learners in their classroom, especially those of ELLs.   With the third barrier teachers may not be aware of the value peers, including other ELLs, have in the inclusion and education of ELLs.   The fourth and final barrier is when teachers may not feel confident using assessment and progress-monitoring tools with ELLs. (Helfrich & Bean, 2011).

To help overcome the first barrier Helfrich and Bean (2011) suggest that, "effective teachers have high expectations for ELLs, and they value cultural differences. Teachers should tie the cultures of their ELLs to the curriculum whenever possible" (p. 164). "ELLs will bring a wealth of experiences from their families, homes, neighborhoods, and communities to school.

Children with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds have stores and experiences that are unique" (Haynes, 2014, section 2, paragraph 2). Give ELLs ample time to share their cultures and experiences. This will allow them to feel part of the classroom community.

Helfrich and Bean suggest to overcome the second barrier, "ELLs may spend more time listening without responding than speaking aloud or volunteering information spontaneously. Teachers should understand that, though a student that may be quiet in class, he or she may be working hard to listen and make sense of what is being said; and because of this, the students may need more time to process information to answer a question or volunteer a response" (Helfrich & Bean, 2011, p. 166). Be sure to give ELLs plenty of wait time after asking them questions. This gives them time to process what is being said. First, they need to figure out what the teacher has said. Then they will need to form their answer. This is often done first in their home language; then an ELL student will need to figure out how to say it in English.

To overcome the third barrier Helfrich and Bean suggest, "teachers should use partner-share, group activities, and peer tutoring, including other ELLs whose knowledge and use of the language is further progressed than others" (Helfrich & Bean, 2011, p. 168). "A buddy who speaks the ELLs language is a wonderful asset at the beginning of the school year. During the adjustment phase, the buddy can explain what is going on. This is a good self-esteem builder for a bilingual buddy and a new friend for the ELL" (Haynes, section 8, paragraph 9, 2014). It is vital to give the "buddies" time to get to know each other during non-academic times. This gives them time to get to know each other without the pressure of learning.

"Teachers should not be hesitant to use assessment, and progress-monitoring tools with ELLs" (Helfrich & Bean, 2011, p. 169). This can help to overcome the fourth barrier. It is sug-

gested that teachers use oral questions and discussions, as well as various forms of adapted assessment. "Give lots of encouragement and praise for what the student can do. Do not dwell on all that they cannot yet do. Create frequent opportunities for success in the class. Do not call upon ELLs to perform alone above their level of competence. Prepare mainstream students to welcome them into the class" (Haynes, 2014, paragraph. 11).

Methods

Participants

This action research project was conducted in a half day preschool classroom. The classroom is located in an elementary school building in a rural Iowa community. This particular preschool class has two available sections, morning and afternoon. Each preschool class meets for four days a week, three hours a day. There are a total of 33 students in both sections; 18 attending in the morning, and 15 in the afternoon. Then ELLs enrolled in this class, and thus became part of this study. Four of the ELLs attended class in the morning, while the other six attended in the afternoon. All of the students who participated in this study received instruction entirely in English. Their home language was not used. The students that attended class in the morning became the experimental group. The students attending in the afternoon became the control group. There was also one student in the control group that was on an IEP. Along with the students, educators in the classroom included a combined general/special education teacher, a general classroom paraprofessional, and three special education paraprofessionals, who worked one-on-one with IEP students.

Data Collection

The main focus of this research project was to discover if using pictures with new vocabulary words would improve ELLs overall language scores in GOLD. Thus, Creative Curriculum

GOLD was the only tool used to collect the necessary data. According to the Center for Educational Measurement and Evaluation (CEME) "The Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment system continues to yield highly valid and reliable results" (Teaching Strategy, 2016, p. 7). Teachers who use this assessment method will track a child's progress throughout the school year by using, primarily, anecdotal notes. These notes are often taken in the form of a journal entry, photos, and videos that are uploaded to the GOLD webpage. Once notes are uploaded, the classroom teacher will score them on the GOLD developmental continuum. There are a total of three checkpoints throughout the school year; however, only two will be used for this research: fall and winter. The fall checkpoint was completed in October. The winter checkpoint was completed in February. For the purpose of this research, only the objectives in language will be looked at.

A checklist was made of 20 vocabulary words that were to be taught throughout the course of this study. Both the control group and the experimental group were shown pictures and asked to name them before being officially introduced to the new words. After spending some time learning the new vocabulary words, both groups were again asked tonnage each of the pictures. To ensure consistency, all of the data collection, with both the experimental and control groups, will be done by either the classroom teacher or the general paraprofessional. As notes are completed, the classroom teacher will upload the documents to the GOLD webpage and then determine how to score them. All notes and records will be taken while students are in their regular classroom environment, during a typical school day.

Students in the experimental group were shown pictures of their new vocabulary words. They were also shown pictures in a book that coincided with their new words. These pictures were then used, throughout the length of a project, to complete different activities that would

help to develop their new vocabulary. Activities used included an interactive word wall, a memory game, and bingo. In turn, the control group was read the same books as the experimental group. The exact same vocabulary words were talked about and explained while reading these books. However, throughout the project, teachers would intentionally use the vocabulary words and talk about them, but the only pictures used were those that were found in the books being read.

Findings

Data Analysis

The data analysis needed to understand this data will be quantitative. The researcher will compare GOLD scores from the fall checkpoint to the winter checkpoint. The independent variable is using pictures to introduce new vocabulary. The dependent variable is sores in GOLD. For the independent variable, the researcher will use a checklist of vocabulary words that will be used before the vocabulary has been introduced and after the study has been completed. The dependent variable data will be collected by taking observation notes. The researcher will then enter them into GOLD and score them accordingly.

Table 1 shows the language scores for students in the experimental group. There were four students in this group. All students spoke Spanish at home. All of them made some gains in their language scores between the fall and winter checkpoints. The smallest gain was one point, and the most significant gain was five points. The experimental group had an average of 50% of students meeting expectations in the fall. In the winter 75% of students were meeting expectations.

Table 1

Experimental Group Gold Scores

Student Name	Average Fall Score	Average Winter Score
Student A	44	45
Student B	40	45
Student C	40	41
Student D	48	51

Table 2 shows the language scores for the control group. There were six students in this

group. Out of those six students, one was on an IEP. All of them spoke Spanish at home. One

student did not make any gains between the fall and winter checkpoints. The smallest gain was

one point, and the most significant gain was eight points. The control group had an average of

67% meeting expectations in the fall and winter.

Table 2

Control Group GOLD Scores

Student Name	Average Fall Score	Average Winter Score

Student E	44	52
Student F	33	34
Student G	43	46
Student H	22	22
Student I	43	47
Student J	46	51

Twenty vocabulary words were selected at the beginning of a study. Before the study began, each child was asked to name the selected vocabulary words. At the end of the study, the students were asked no name the same vocabulary words. The study lasted approximately six weeks. Table 3 shows the growth between before and after the study for the experimental group.   The experimental group had an average gain of 4 words.

Table 3

Experimental Group Vocabulary Words

Students Name	Number of Vocabulary Words Before Project	Number of Vocabulary Words After Project
Student A	12	19
Student B	15	16
Student C	12	18
Student D	13	18

Table 4 shows the growth between before and after the study for the control group. The

control group had an average gain of 2 words.

Table 4

Control Group Vocabulary Words

Students Name	Number of Vocabulary Words Before Project	Number of Vocabulary Words After Project
Student F	11	14
Student G	13	14
Student H	14	18
Student I	1	1
Student J	16	18
Student K	15	18

Discussion

Summary of Major Findings

The findings of this study indicated that using pictures to teach vocabulary words shows

some increase in ELLs language scores in GOLD.   Although there was not a dramatic increase

in GOLD scores, there was enough growth to indicate that the study could be successful. This, along with the growth in the number of vocabulary words learned shows that there is some merit to the findings. Allowing students to see a visual of the word in multiple settings is a beneficial way to teach new vocabulary to ELLs. The more often a student is exposed to new vocabulary, the more likely they are to retain those words.

Based on many studies school success is linked to vocabulary knowledge. Listening to new words during a read aloud is a great way to increase new vocabulary intake. It is even better to have those words paired with a picture that is used in multiple settings throughout the classroom.   Learning new words through engaging, hands-on activities will help bridge the gap of ELLs. It is essential for teachers to have developmentally appropriate activities planned for all lessons, as well as during available free time. These activities should be taught in a meaningful context and related clusters.

Limitations of the Study

The sample size in this research study was small, meaning it had low generalizability. To get more valid results, it would have been best to have a larger sample size. It may even be beneficial to add to the study by looking at children in multiple classrooms. This can be built upon even further by comparing children in different school districts. This could allow the researcher a chance to discover how the methods between districts vary. If the researcher also had the opportunity to look at the students' growth over the entire school year, this would help to aid in more accurate findings. In fact, the longer the study is used, the more authentic the results will be. If the study was applied to classrooms on a yearly basis, this would give the researcher a better picture of what the long term effects are on ELLs. Every year may vary, depending on the

students enrolled in the class. This means that the data collected in some years may be extremely limited. However, the potential benefits of this study make any data collection worthwhile.

The validity and reliability of the checklist is still unknown. Since the checklist was teacher made, it is more difficult to determine how accurate it may be. Every classroom is unique and contains a variety of students. The needs of the students will determine who, or how many, are eligible for the study. A teacher researcher wanting to duplicate this action research project in their own classroom may need to make adjustments based on the study's participants.

Further Study

Pictures should continue to be used in the preschool classroom as a way to help teach vocabulary to all students, but especially ELLs. The researcher recommends that further research and studies need to be conducted in order to determine the actual effects of using pictures to teach vocabulary words. The researcher also recommends that further studies should include a larger population of ELLs in order to see the impact of using pictures to teach new vocabulary words. It would be best to have a study that was able to compare several years' worth of data. This would lead to a more accurate conclusion as to whether or not the study is a useful tool in determining vocabulary retention.

<div align="center">

Conclusion

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Based on the results from the action research that took place, using pictures to teach vocabulary has a small effect on ELLs language scores. There was a slightly more significant increase in GOLD scores among the students of the experimental group versus the control group. More research needs to be conducted in the area of vocabulary interventions for preschool ELLs. There is significantly more research on school-aged children. Now that children are attending

school at an earlier age, there is a need to study the effects of acquiring a second language as a young child.

According to the literature review, appropriate intervention can help narrow the achievement gap between ELLs and their language proficient peers. As teachers implement these interventions, they need to remember that learning vocabulary for ELLs is divided into five stages and what each stage entails. Teachers should be aware of what stage each student is at so that they may accurately meet the needs of each child. Using books as a way to introduce new vocabulary was discussed the most in the research. Teachers should choose vocabulary words from books they read aloud. These words are then intentionally taught. The teacher may point out pictures in the book that show the meaning of the words. After introducing the new vocabulary words through books, teachers then can use hands-on activities to reinforce the new words. Using new vocabulary throughout the day is another strategy that is a natural way to help ELLs learn new words. The teacher should pick a few new words at a time and be intentional about using them as part of conversations held during the school day.

This research will help teachers have a better understanding of how to best help preschool ELLs learn new vocabulary. With the population of ELLs growing in many states, teachers need to be aware of what research says is the best way to help this population of students to be successful in school. "Children who enter school with a proficient level of English follow a similar academic trajectory as native English-speaking children, but those who start school without English proficiency fall behind" (Kieffer, 2008, p.853). By taking the time in preschool to intentionally teach new vocabulary words, ELL students will be better equipped with a more extensive vocabulary to help them succeed as they continue through school.

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