THE EFFECTS OF RESEARCH-BASED STRATEGIES ON READING ACHIEVEMENT

AMONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative, causal-comparative study was to examine the results of phonics-based instruction versus guided reading instruction on reading achievement among minority students who are English Language Learners. This study is important because it addresses the gap in the literature that does not target research-based reading instructional strategies that are effective for English Language Learners separate from those that are observed as effective in students whose primary language is English. Archival data were obtained from 86 elementary school English Language Learners in the second grade at two Georgia suburban schools. The instrument used in this study is the MAP test. With permission from the participant schools, data was obtained by reviewing previously submitted lesson plans and reviewing past MAP score reports. An Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) test was used to determine if there was a difference in reading achievement between English Language Learners who received guided reading instruction at the same frequency as phonics-based reading instruction as measured by Lexile scores acquired on the MAP test when controlling for the pretest. All assumptions of ANCOVA were tested and met, concluding that there is a significant difference between English Language Learners who received guided reading instruction at the same frequency as phonics-based reading instruction. Further research is recommended. Other recommendations include ensuring that English Language Learners receive guided reading instruction at the same frequency.

Keywords: *phonics, guided reading, sight words, English Language Learners, literacy*

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List of Abbreviations

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)

Basic interpersonal communicative skills (BIC)

World-class instructional design and development (WIDA)

Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language

Learners (ACCESS)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This quantitative, causal-comparative study aimed to determine if there is a difference in reading achievement of English Language Learners that are taught utilizing research-based reading instructional strategies. Chapter one provides a background on the topics of reading achievement in the United States among students whose primary language is English and reading achievement among students who are English Language Learners. Additionally, the background includes a theoretical framework for this study and the purpose of the study. The significance of the study proceeds the research questions, and a list of key terms and their definitions concludes the chapter.

Background

Recently, learning and teaching have emphasized technology in the educational field. This has become such a point of emphasis that even the National Board for Professional Teaching Practices has amended the definition of literacy to include technology. This updated definition now states that literacy "encompasses reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing across a variety of contexts, providing multiple ways of making meaning in the world," suggesting that this "viewing" is a practice that language arts teachers should include in their teaching strategies (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2017). Despite these more technological trends, text-based material is still the cornerstone of measuring reading achievement. Reading is a fundamental skill (Sutter et al., 2019), and one of the most pressing issues in education in the United States today relates to reading and reading achievement. As of 2022, only 33% of students in the United States are achieving proficient reading skills by the fourth grade which is a drop from the levels recorded in 2019 (NAEP Reading, 2023).

Throughout history, instructional reading methods have frequently been debated and discussed in the search for the most effective reading instructional methods.

Historical Overview

Reading instruction has always been a prioritized area in American education. During colonial times, reading instruction followed Great Britain's instruction trend. Colonists prioritized and utilized the alphabet method of reading instruction (Monaghan & Barry, 1999). The alphabet method consisted of students naming letters and spelling syllables orally. First, students would advance to spelling words by spelling out short or one-syllable words and increasing the number of syllables until they were spelling long words up to eight syllables (Monaghan & Barry, 1999). This method served as the primary method of reading instruction until the beginning of the nineteenth century. During this period—the early to mid-nineteenth century—other methods of reading instruction became popular, such as phonics and whole-word instruction.

Phonics instruction was popularized by Noah Webster, albeit unintentionally (Emans, 1968). Webster developed phonics as a method of standardizing American speech, not as a method of reading instruction, towards the end of the eighteenth century. Webster desired to eliminate the differences caused by dialect and have one standard, uniform dialect for all Americans. However, this strategy became the basis of phonics instruction that would continue to be utilized (almost exclusively) until the mid-nineteenth century.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Horace Mann visited schools in European countries such as Prussia and Switzerland. Inspired by the schools there and through Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi's teaching methods, Horace Mann began to advocate for whole-word instruction (Emans, 1968). Pestalozzi supported presenting words together with the object or a picture of the

object they represented as a method of teaching reading. Due to these influences, educators began teaching the meaning of words before simply focusing on the sounds produced and put together to make the words. (Emans, 1968).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, phonics instruction became the most popular method of reading instruction. However, the instructional focus had developed and evolved. Previously phonics instruction was based on individual letters; in the resurgent phonics theory, word families were emphasized (Emans, 1968). Children learned up to one hundred-word families and practiced drills with these word families. When instruction increased past word family memorizations and single words, educators focused on teaching sentences or passages that contained those word family patterns.

Around 1920, phonics fell out of popularity as an instructional method for reading once again. (Smith, 1957). Reading instruction shifted to silent reading and more forms of whole-word instruction as researchers felt phonics only helped with word recognition and not comprehension. However, this shifted again in the 1930s when phonics instruction returned as the primary reading instructional method (Emans, 1968). This shift was primarily caused by educators' and instructors' realization that memorizing all words by sight was difficult. Additionally, further research during this period, such as that completed by Winch (1925) in England and Tiffin & McKinnis (1940) supported the belief that phonetic instruction was the most productive (Emans, 1968). Throughout the remainder of the twentieth century, a combination of phonics and whole-word instruction continued to be used throughout reading instruction and continues to be used today (Ehri, 2020).

Society-at-Large

While curriculum metrics and measures vary from district to district and state to state, all

curricula include reading instruction and some accountability measures for those reading skills (Shapiro et al., 2006). In addition to being a fundamental skill for other academic subjects, reading is also a success or achievement predictor for students (Espin & Deno, 1993). This includes being a predictor both in school and postsecondary/career successes. Therefore, students need to have sufficient reading skills to succeed.

In addition to predicting success rates for academics and postsecondary choices, reading is often used as an evaluation criterion. The success of students' reading achievement is used to evaluate teacher, school, and district effectiveness. Many states—such as Arizona—utilize students' reading scores on standardized tests to evaluate their school districts. (Adams et al., 2020) In some situations, these evaluations can also affect the funding various school districts and schools receive. In Arizona, schools are awarded additional funds to schools with exceptional reading scores. (Adams et al., 2020) This incentive program encourages states to prioritize and improve reading instruction. The presence of such evaluation programs and incentive programs focused primarily on reading instruction show the importance of reading achievement in education.

Despite the importance of reading achievement and the high importance and focus placed on reading achievement, the United States has traditionally underperformed in reading. The National Assessment of Educational Progress assesses student performance in reading in grades 4, 8, and 12 throughout the United States (Garcia & Mirra, 2019). These assessments have been conducted every two or four years since 1992 (Garcia & Mirra, 2019). Based on this assessment data, educators and educational professionals can understand reading achievement trends nationwide (Garcia & Mirra, 2019).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress has provided the following test score data, which provides a historical statistical view of reading achievement in America (Fast Facts: Reading, 2020). In 1992, the average reading score for fourth-grade students was 217. In 2017, the average reading score for fourth-grade students was 222; in 2019, the average reading score was 219. In 1992, the average reading score for eighth-grade students was 260. In 2017, the average reading score for eighth-grade students was 267, and in 2019 the average reading score for eighth-grade students was 263. In 1992, the average reading score for twelfth-grade students was 292, while in 2013 and 2015, the average reading score for twelfth-grade students was 287 (Fast Facts: Reading, 2020).

The statistics show that reading achievement in the United States has not improved significantly throughout the past three decades. In addition to many reading achievement averages remaining close to or near the same levels as the initial tests presented in 1992, the averages from some years dip below the previous years' average. This shows that not only is reading achievement growth in the United States limited, but it is also not consistent. In addition to a general lack of improvement in overall reading achievement averages, students also show a general lack of proficiency. In 2017, only 37% of fourth-grade students performed at or above the proficient level on the national assessment of educational progress (Sutter et al., 2019). Due to the importance of reading achievement, these lowered levels of growth and achievement represent a significant problem.

Although reading achievement in the United States shows a lack of growth and achievement, there are certain subpopulations in which the problem is exacerbated. Students who are English Language Learners have traditionally shown lower levels of reading achievement – even lower than the already stunted national average. Most fourth, eighth, and twelfth-grade

English Language Learners students decreased their average reading achievement score on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP Reading, 2020). This is particularly concerning to American society as English Language Learners are already a vulnerable population who tend to have been negatively impacted (Sherwood, 2018)

Theoretical Background

The basis of this study is Cummin's language development theory. Cummin's language development theory delves into how English Language Learners' language development explicitly affects their reading skills. Reading skills require a combination of language and decoding skills (Adams et al., 2020). Reading comprehension is believed to be a product of both oral language skills and word-level reading. However, for this population of students, these are often two areas of weakness (Adams et al., 2020). Due to these language-related conditions, English Language Learners experience decoding, oral language, and comprehension deficits compared to their non-English Language Learner peers due to their language differences (Adams et al., 2020).

Cummins theorizes that these language skills are limited in English Language Learners because of their differences in two different language skills. He called these two different language areas basic interpersonal communicative skills (BIC) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). BIC skills are commonly referred to as conversation skills, while CALP is more related to academic language. Cummins' work suggests that English Language Learners can demonstrate proficiency in BIC while deficient in CALP (Cummins, 1999). It is essential to utilize reading instructional strategies that specifically focus on increasing comprehension and CALP, not just decoding or fluency, to decrease the reading achievement deficit caused by these

language differences. Cummins's theory is the basis of this study because this study examines instructional strategies which target different reading skills.

Problem Statement

Lack of reading achievement within the United States is not a new issue and not one without research. However, when researching specific populations of students, it is difficult to find research that addresses the full scope of the problem, including not only the background and underlying issues of the problem. Previous studies—such as the meta-analysis by Gilmour et al. (2019) have focused on different student subpopulations, such as students with disabilities, students from particular ethnic groups (NAEP Reading, 2020), or English Language Learners (Adams et al., 2020). The current research provides valuable information on reading achievement for these different individual subgroups; however, not many studies focus on how the frequency of these reading instructional methods varies for these different subgroups. The National Assessment of Educational Progress guides instruction and the development of standards across the nation (Garcia & Mirra, 2019). Due to its high-impact consequences, it is important to have up-to-date statistics that reflect the status of students who fit into these subgroups to determine how—or if—the frequency of interventions affects student achievement in these subgroups.

Furthermore, to develop effective and long-lasting solutions that adequately address the issues that stunt reading achievement, one must understand the full scope of the problem. In education, the cause of a problem cannot solely lie in the student or even in the cognitive and cultural abilities of the student, particularly in this advanced age of research. Different literature reviews, such as the one completed by Okkinga et al. (2018), have shown a large quantity of research available on various reading strategies and instructional methods and how they can be

used to improve reading achievement. However, despite the presence of this research, reading achievement is still stunted (NAEP Reading, 2020). The problem is that existing research only addresses the validity of instructional strategies. A gap exists in determining which strategies are being utilized with fidelity in the classroom—at which frequencies—and the results when these strategies are utilized with fidelity at varying frequencies.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative, causal-comparative study was to examine the results of research-based reading instructional strategies that are implemented with fidelity and differing frequencies on reading achievement among minority students who are English Language Learners. The study aimed to determine how the implementation of explicit, systematic phonics-based instruction combined with either sight word instruction or repeated reading strategies affects reading achievement. The independent variable in the study was the reading strategies being implemented by the instructors—the use of sight word instruction and explicit phonics instruction versus the use of guided reading instruction—and the dependent variable was reading achievement as measured by the current end of year's Lexile score. The beginning of the semester Lexile score will serve as a covariate. Students will have been identified by the attending school as an English Language Learner either by completing the home language survey or receiving ESOL services. Students will consist of one grade level: second-grade students. Students will be randomly assigned to classes and classes from the attending schools will be randomly chosen.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the overall body of reading achievement and factors that influence reading achievement by examining a significant subpopulation of students in the

United States. In the past two decades, the number of English Language Learners within the United States has been steadily and consistently increasing (Mellom et al., 2018). As of 2017, the percentage of English Language Learners was 10.1% higher than in 2000 (English Language Learners in Public Schools, 2021). It is important to address this student population, as they comprise a rapidly growing percentage of the overall student population in the United States.

Teacher preparedness and training is also paramount and an issue that will be addressed with the results of this study. Teacher attrition is a prominent issue in the United States and has contributed to a consistent teaching shortage over the past few decades. (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). This is only exacerbated in the subset of teachers that teach minority populations such as ESOL and special education (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Teacher shortages are linked to teacher attrition and have resulted in many nontraditional teacher-credentialing programs. By increasing the breadth of knowledge about the strategies that are currently being utilized and how these strategies affect student outcomes—and, consequently, teacher effectiveness—this study will serve a dual purpose. Teacher training programs and educational institutions will know what training should be prioritized throughout teacher preparation curricula; this can be addressed at the preservice level or throughout continuing education at the in-service level.

Additionally, this study is useful in determining what should be required for reading training for alternative certification. Many school districts and educational agencies allow for alternative credentialing programs or processes. However, many teachers who undergo these programs do not complete the program or leave the field altogether. (Newton et al., 2020) Improving the training of the teachers who undergo alternative certification programs would likely improve student outcomes and decrease teacher attrition rates. By having a clearer view of what strategies are the most successful, schools that employ alternative credentialing programs

will have an increased purview on which training strategies to include in the alternative preparation curricula. This study can also help schools and training programs streamline their current training offerings.

Research Question

The research questions for this study are as follows:

RQ1: Is there a difference in Lexile scores among second-grade English Language Learners based on the frequency of reading instruction methods (sight word instruction and explicit phonics instruction or guided reading instruction) while controlling for previous achievement?

Definitions

1. *Automaticity* – the ability to perform complex skills with minimal attention and conscious effort (Samuels & Flor, 1997).

2. *English Language Learners* – a student who does not demonstrate proficiency in English based on school-administered assessments (MacSwan & Rolstad, 2006).

3. *Explicit, Systematic Phonics Instruction* – instruction matched to students' developmental level. It incorporates a scope and sequence for content delivery and a variety of word study activities (Mesmer & Griffith, 2005).

4. *Research-Based Instructional Strategies* - strategies "that have been proven to increase the likelihood that students will be able to retain, recall, and apply what they have been taught" (Fox, 2014, p. 93)

5. *Students with Disabilities* – a student who has a disability that adversely affects his educational performance and meets one of the disability criteria established by IDEA (Thomas, 2016).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The literature review provides insight into the theoretical framework and prior research that influenced this paper. This research was primarily inspired by language development theory first proposed by Jim Cummins. This theory gives insight into the differences between English Language Learners and those students whose primary language is English. Understanding this theory also gives further insight into developing interventions and instructional strategies that produce better literacy outcomes for English Language Learners. The human motivation theory developed by Abraham Maslow also plays a central role in the current research due to the critical role of motivation in human development in general and learning as well as the theory of involuntary minorities proposed by John Ogbu. Additionally, prior research was reviewed to determine how phonics instruction, sight word instruction, and guided reading instruction have affected English Language Learners in the past.

Theoretical Framework

This section of the paper explores Cummins' language development theory, Maslow's theory of human motivation, and Ogbu's theory of involuntary minorities. Cummins' language development theory is relevant to the study because it addresses the underlying factors that influence English Language Learners' language acquisition and their literacy development (Cummins, 2009). Maslow's theory addresses motivation and how motivation affects humans. This theory can also address the different ways that student motivation can be influenced and subsequently have an effect on academic achievement (Jiang et al., 2021). Ogbu's theory addresses how students' cultural background can be a factor in language development and their overall academic achievement (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

Cummins' Language Development Theory

The primary theory that comprises the framework for this paper is the language development theory. The primary theorist behind this theory is Jim Cummins. Jim Cummins was born in 1949 to an Irish family in Dublin, Ireland. Throughout his childhood, although born to an English-speaking family, Cummins attended a school where 80% of the curriculum was taught in Irish (Cummins et al., 2001). Due to being born into an English family, Cummins was a bilingual student. Despite this—which could have adversely affected his academic performance— Cummins excelled educationally at the school. Due to his own educational experience in which he had to learn a second language while simultaneously learning academic content, Cummins's interest in multilingual learners was piqued. This interest would later inspire Cummins to pursue further studies and research in the subject. Following his secondary education, Cummins immigrated to Canada and developed research that explained how bilingualism contributed to learning (Cummins et al., 2001).

Throughout his research, Cummins developed the concept of basic interpersonal communicative skills. Prior to Cummins's research, the dominating belief in English Language studies was based on a combination of observations and research conducted by Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976) and Oller (1979). Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976) observed immigrant children in Sweden (Cummins, 1980). While conducting their research, they observed that there were Finnish immigrant children who would seemingly be fluent in Finnish and Swedish. Despite seeming to have oral fluency in both languages, however, their academic performance in these languages was below expectations for both their grade level and age. Oller (1979) conducted research and theorized that these differences were due to one underlying factor, which he coined as global language proficiency.

Oller describes global language proficiency as an intrinsic factor (Oller & Hinofotis, 1980). Oller describes this intrinsic factor as a factor that affects a person's ability in their primary language or the language spoken to them in their household while developing their first language skills. Oller describes this factor as a factor that underlies individuals' performance and ability in different languages. Oller also describes this proficiency factor as an internalized grammar. Oller explains that this internalized grammar system may not be uniform across different languages acquired but does impart a certain propensity in the individuals who possess it to be successful in different languages (Oller & Hinofotis, 1980). Oller's continued to develop the theory of global language proficiency. Oller's later work and further explanation of his theory of global language proficiency deeply relied on the idea that a person's first language and subsequent additional languages are interdependent. (Oller, 1979)

Cummins (1999) argued against this theory of global language proficiency. Cummins argued that the differences between students of different ages cannot be compressed into just one general area or dimension. He explained these concepts using the examples of two monolingual English-speaking siblings, one six and one twelve years old. In his example, Cummins explains that between the two siblings, there are significant differences. These differences would include the children's ability to read and write English as well as their vocabulary knowledge. The siblings' knowledge and abilities in everyday contexts would also be very similar. The six-year-old would be able to understand pretty much everything that is said to them in that everyday context, and they would be able to express themselves and use language very effectively in the context of everyday life. The same would be said for the twelve-year-old sibling. The differences between the two would lie in the students' phonology and basic fluency. The siblings have these similarities and differences because different areas of language development advance differently.

Components such as phonology plateau so that the differences between children of different ages are not as noticeable, while other components, such as vocabulary, continue to develop throughout our lives. Because of these differences in the components of language development— and their subsequent effect on literacy—differences in proficiency cannot be summed up in one solitary domain, such as global language proficiency suggests.

Basic interpersonal communicative skills are typically referred to as social or conversational skills. Cognitive academic language proficiency reflects "the extent to which an individual has access to and command of the oral and written academic registers of schooling" (Cummins, 2000, p. 67). Cummins found throughout his research that educators and policymakers would often confuse conversational (basic interpersonal communicative) and academic (cognitive academic language proficiency) skills. Figure 1 ("BICS/CALP", 2022) shows Cummins' iceberg, which illustrates how BIC is the tip or more superficial of the two language skills.

Figure 1

Cummins' Iceberg
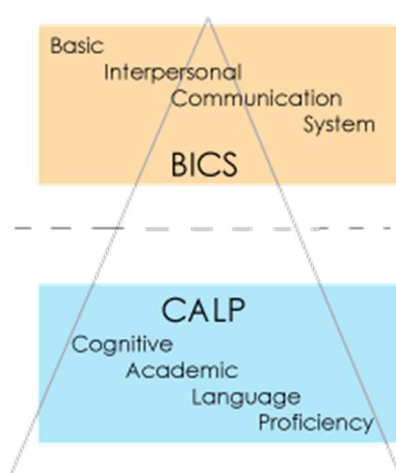
This is why similar to the observations by Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976), educators would often notice that immigrant students whom they felt were fluent or proficient in English were performing below grade-level or age-related expectations (Cummins, 1980). Cummins concluded that educators' lack of knowledge about language acquisition in bilingual students and their erroneous conflation of basic interpersonal communicative skills and cognitive academic language proficiency significantly led to academic problems for English Language Learners. Due to this, Cummins theorized that a distinction between basic interpersonal communicative skills and cognitive academic language proficiency was necessary to inform educational practice (Cummins, 2008).

Other theories and research have shown that Cummin's theory has validity. Sibold (2011) notes that in elementary and secondary school, vocabulary instruction is not given the attention required. This includes academic vocabulary. Academic vocabulary is "language that may occur in multiple contexts or precise words that are presented in a specific context" (Sibold, 2011, p. 24). This language is directly correlated to academic achievement and performance as mastery of this realm of vocabulary has been shown to help students acquire new literacy skills and techniques (DiCerbo et al., 2014).

Academic vocabulary is not only directly linked to content knowledge but is also more difficult to learn (Sibold, 2011). Many schools' curricula focus on teaching vocabulary across the curriculum, but it is not always explicitly taught and focused on. Many English Language Learners struggle with comprehension related to the issues that English Language Learners face with academic vocabulary. This gives further credence to Cummin's theory of the difference between cognitive academic language proficiency and basic interpersonal communicative skills. This explains the fluency and academic achievement gap observed in many bilingual students.

Many English Language Learners—similar to the Finnish immigrant students observed by Skutnab-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976)—can converse and communicate with their teachers and other school staff proficiently (Cummins, 2000). However, these same students struggle when presented with academic tasks that rely heavily on academic vocabulary. Although they are proficient conversationally, they are not proficient academically. This underscores Oller's theory of global language proficiency while lending credence to Cummins' basic interpersonal communicative skills/cognitive academic language proficiency distinction theory. Cummins' basic interpersonal communicative skills/cognitive academic language proficiency distinction theory hinges on bilingual learners and is therefore pertinent to understanding the academic performance of English Language Learners.

Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is related to the study at hand because it delves into the concept of motivation (Maslow, 1943). The purpose of the study is not only to determine which existing literacy interventions are most effective relative to language development but also to suggest more effective ways to implement these interventions within the classroom. In order to understand how to formulate the most effective instructional programs for English Language Learners, researchers must understand what will motivate students to engage and partake wholly in their instruction.

Motivation in education has been a topic of interest for quite some time, with Maslow having developed his theory of human needs over 75 years ago (McLeod, 2007). Although countless research has been done on various types of instructional methods and educational theories, there has not been one method that has garnered a 100% success rate. Even the most effective research-based methods have varying methods of success. Many instructional methods

have outliers or students who significantly underperform. There are many different possible explanations for these outliers or underperformers. One possible explanation is that the motivation level of different students affects their overall performance.

Motivation can be defined as "those processes that can a) arouse and instigate behavior; b) give direction and purpose to behavior; c) continue to allow behavior to persist and d) lead to choosing or preferring a particular behavior" (Ray, 1992, p. 3). Ray (1992) describes motivation as an essential factor in learning. Motivation can be a factor that pushes academic performance or decreases academic success. Determining a student's motivation to learn and what affects their motivation to learn can help educators and school systems with the specific students they are working with and develop more effective educational and learning systems or programs for students as a whole. This is why understanding student motivation is so crucial to ensuring they receive an effective education.

While Maslow's theory does not explicitly focus on education, Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory that breaks down motivation which can relate to academic achievement. Maslow (1943) describes motivation as a result of a human attempt to fulfill one of five basic needs. According to Maslow, these five basic needs are often sought after by humans in a hierarchal manner – meaning that until the lower levels are achieved, the upper levels are often not sought after (Maslow, 1943). Maslow points out in his work that sometimes different levels are sought after in conjunction with others but that they typically follow a particular order.

The five basic needs are physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization, with humans pursuing the needs in the order listed (Maslow, 1943). Physiological needs are those that the body physically needs or lacks. Physiological needs can include food, water, warmth, and rest. Maslow considers these needs the most vital, as the human body cannot function if this set

of needs is not satisfied (McLeod, 2007). While these needs do not seem explicitly related to education, these needs can be observed in the classroom and learning environment. A comfortable physical environment can affect a student's education and learning experience. Jiang et al. (2021) determined that a student's physical environment is not only related to their academic performance but also vital to their overall success. Jiang et al. (2021) observed that in rural areas where students have to wear coats or take other measures to be comfortable, their performance tends to be lower than those who reported feeling comfortable while learning. Other physiological needs also affect education even though they are not directly measured or at bay in the classroom. A student does not constantly eat while learning; however, their education will likely be adversely impacted if they feel hungry or underfed. Similarly, a student's education may be adversely impacted if they are overeating or not eating nutritionally sound foods. The same can be said for other physiological needs that are not directly observed or managed in the classroom, such as rest and water. The student's education is negatively impacted if these needs are not met or managed well outside of the classroom.

Safety needs are related to a general sense of health and well-being; in adults, these can be manifested as a secure source of income, or in children, they can be manifested as a routine that helps the child feel secure. The safety needs are those that can be observed and managed in multiple ways both in and out of the classroom. This sense of security can come from the child's home in having a safe and stable household. It can also come from having a stable routine in the child's home; this includes but is not limited to routines related to school. For example, a student who comes home every day and has a parent who helps them with homework and spends quality time with members of the family may achieve that feeling of security. This has been correlated with higher academic success (Roche & Ghazarian, 2012). Conversely, a student who comes

home after school and is by themselves in the home may lack that sense of security which may begin to affect the student's educational performance.

Security needs can also be affected and manifested within the school building. The culture inside the school building and the classroom is vital to establishing a student's security needs. Research has been conducted on the benefits of explicating teaching and establishing routines in the classroom and the school buildings as a whole. Cruz & Padilla (2011) found that when the focus is on establishing a productive and enriching routine/schedule for students' school day, a learning culture is established and maintained rather than chaos. More so, focusing on this schedule and routine that enriches student development and learning contributes to a positive sense of security for the students when they are in the school setting.

Love needs are the next set of needs in Maslow's hierarchy. Maslow describes these needs as the need for love, affection, and belonging. These may be satisfied through intimate relationships such as a romantic partner. However, non-intimate relationships such as family and friends can also satisfy these needs. These are the relationships that students often find security in, particularly in the school setting. Students can develop a sense of belonging and affection through pride and affection for their school and the people they interact with at the school. When students have strong bonds with their teachers and strong friend groups in which they are confident and secure, their love needs are closer to being satisfied. Pendergast et al. (2018) find that a higher sense of belonging correlates with a more positive performance in school.

Esteem needs are based on the idea that all people in our society have a need or desire for a stable, firm-based, high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect or self-esteem, and the esteem of others (Maslow, 1943). Esteem needs can be related to prestige and a feeling of achievement in oneself. Studies have found that self-efficacy and esteem-related feelings are

significant contributors to academic performance. It has also been shown that school and what happens in school can contribute to this feeling of self-efficacy and esteem needs, even if they are developed through other relationships outside of school (Tus, 2020).

The final need, Maslow theorizes, is only sought once the others have been completed. Self-actualization needs are based upon a person seeking to do what he or she is fit to do. Self-actualization needs can be fulfilled through academic activities but are not only limited to that arena. Self-actualization needs also include creative pursuits (McLeod, 2007). When students feel a higher level of self-actualization, they are more likely to be successful in school and show higher levels of academic achievement.

Maslow's hierarchy can further be separated into two different types of needs. These needs are deficiency needs and growth needs. Deficiency needs are those in which motivation decreases as needs are met. Growth needs are those in which motivation increases as needs are met. Physiological, safety, love, and esteem needs are all deficiency needs (McLeod, 2007). When these needs are not met, motivation can decrease. Self-actualization is the only growth need. As self-actualization grows, motivation will likely increase.

In addition to needs changing and being fluid, needs can also be salient. When deficit needs—psychological, safety, love, and esteem needs—are met, they become salient. Once a need becomes salient, a person unconsciously stops seeking that particular need and then begins seeking new needs that have not been fulfilled (McLeod, 2007). Growth needs do not become salient, however. Growth needs to continue to be felt, and the need to fulfill them becomes even stronger once one begins to pursue this need. Educators and education policymakers should be aware of these different needs, how they can be fulfilled, or how that affects their academic progress.

Progress in Maslow's hierarchy is not unilateral or uniform for all (McLeod, 2007). As previously stated, the hierarchy normally has needs that are met before others, but some of these needs may be accomplished at the same time. For example, physiological and safety needs may be addressed concurrently in one's life. Similarly, different needs can affect other needs in the hierarchy. One could achieve physiological needs, such as food and clothing, and move on to other needs in the hierarchy, such as esteem. However, if there is a life change and the student becomes homeless due to a parent losing their job, the student would move in the other direction on the hierarchy and go back to needing physiological needs fulfilled. It is important to note these changes in students as they could affect and lead to changes in a student's academic performance. Many English Language Learners are in lower socioeconomic classes or situations where their needs may be in flux or differ from students from different cultural backgrounds. Maslow's theory is vital in understanding where these students are in the hierarchy and how it subsequently influences their education.

Ogbu's Theory of Involuntary Minorities

The primary theorist in the theory of involuntary minorities was John Ogbu. John Ogbu was a Nigerian scholar who developed the theory of involuntary minorities. Although born in Nigeria, Ogbu attended college in the United States, and it is here that he developed an interest in minority education. After developing this interest, Ogbu studied minority education in America and other countries for over 28 years. One area of particular interest to Ogbu was the difference in academic performance between minority students and students of the dominant ethnic group. He also then expanded his research and theory to explain the difference between the academic performances of different minority groups (Ogbu &, 1998).

One of the most essential ideas that came out of Ogbu's research was focused on how minority groups are classified. This led to the development of the involuntary minority theory. In Ogbu's earlier work, he described what he called caste-like minorities. Ogbu described these groups as caste-like minorities because all the groups he observed were subordinate groups in their present society (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Ogbu also noted that in these societal systems, the stratification system was more rigid than just a social class stratification. These minorities were consistently denied equal educational opportunities. These educational opportunities included "access to educational resources, treatment in school, and rewards in employment and wages for educational accomplishments" (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Based on these observations, Ogbu concluded that the lower academic performance of these castelike minorities was likely the result of the barriers faced by the students' adult counterparts.

As Ogbu furthered his research, he expanded the concept of caste-like minorities and structural barriers to minority education to include community forces and other components. Ogbu (1983) described community forces as the products of sociocultural adaptation and are located within the minority community. Ogbu wanted to further his research and explore this area because while exploring communities in his previous research, he noticed that immigrant and nonimmigrant minorities displayed different sociocultural adaptations. He wanted to explore what forces result in immigrant minorities exhibiting higher levels of academic performance than nonimmigrant minorities.

After further research, Ogbu (1998) concluded that these differences could not be attributed to language differences, genetic predisposition, or cultural differences in education (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). None of these factors were shown to be superior in immigrant minorities. These factors have the potential to have adverse effects on education and academic

performance but cannot solely be responsible for differences in immigrant and nonimmigrant minority academic performance. Understanding the difference between minority groups' performance in school required knowledge of two things: the immigrant group's response to their history in the United States and how their response to said history consequently affects their views on schooling in the United States and their response to schooling.

Ogbu compiled this research to develop his cultural-ecological theory of minority school performance. This theory has two major components: the system and community forces. The system comprises how minorities are treated (or possibly mistreated) in the educational environment. This system includes educational policies, development, and implementation of educational pedagogy and students' perceived or actual return on investment for their investment in their education and academic credentials (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

The second component of Ogbu's theory is community forces. Community forces are very broad and include how and why a group became a minority group. Determining community forces can be a complex process. It first involves examining the treatment of the dominant ethnic group of minority groups. This includes the collective problems faced by minority groups or the different ways in which discrimination influences the lives of minorities (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). This theory also includes those collective solutions that are exhibited by minority communities. Collective solutions are the responses of minority communities to the collective problems they face. Common collective solutions exhibited in many minority communities are relational and symbolic discrimination.

Relational discrimination happens when minority groups lose trust in the institutions touted by the dominant ethnic group. As education has always been a field primarily developed and led by the dominant ethnic group, this is one of the areas in which mistrust has been

observed (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Symbolic discrimination occurs when minority groups show opposition to the culture and language of the dominant ethnic group. Minority groups may only partially reference or adopt the different cultural and language structures utilized in the school setting to move away from the ways of the dominant ethnic group (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

The differences in the ways minority communities are treated are not limited to the wider societal context. These inconsistencies and products of discrimination are often seen throughout the school system in different ways. This includes the different educational policies and practices that affect the minority as a whole, the treatment of minority students in the school and classroom as well as the rewards—or often the lack of rewards—that minorities are given in society for their schooling. Ogbu's (1998) cultural-ecological theory of minority education hinges on the idea that these factors—in addition to cultural and language differences—that account for lowered academic performance among minorities. When examining the research on minority students, it can be seen that many researchers take these factors into account when exploring the academic performance of minority groups.

Theoretical Contribution to Literacy Development in English Language Learners

Cummins', Maslow's, and Ogbu's theories have advanced the field of research regarding English Language Learners and their education significantly. Cummins's work and research begin with an interest in bilingualism and expanded until he delved into a major language difference between English Language Learners and monolinguistic learners. The work on bilingual learners and how vocabulary acquisition and mastery affect academic performance did not end with Cummins's work. In addition to many other researchers exploring the connection between conversational and academic vocabulary differences, many papers have focused specifically on Cummins's work and expanded the research he began. Other researchers such as

Collier (1987), Brown (2007), and Echevarria and Graves (2007) have continued this research and provided more information on the different development stages of language acquisition. Additionally, researchers have studied to ascertain the length of time it typically takes to develop conversational language (basic interpersonal communicative skills) and academic language (cognitive academic language proficiency).

Maslow's theory has continued to be explored by other researchers as well. Maslow's theory is present in many educational papers and research. Maslow continued to develop the hierarchy of needs to include more transitional levels or needs—cognitive and transcendence needs (Mcleod, 2007). He also adjusted his original hierarchy to ensure that the different levels/needs are not as rigid as in his original research. This study continues to build on the theory of human motivation as the researchers were able to see students had a natural motivation—under the esteem tier of Maslow's hierarchy—to engage in the reading strategies utilized in the study. Subsequent research that supports Maslow's hierarchy has found that there is a connection between low socioeconomic backgrounds and lowered academic achievement. It is theorized that this connection is due to a lack of deficiency needs being met—due to poverty and low economic advantages—which leads to difficulty in achieving the higher esteem needs (Noltemeyer et al., 2021). A connection between the sample in this study and lowered academic achievement adds continued support to Maslow's hierarchy and certifies that esteem needs can motivate student academic performance.

As with the other theorists whose work influenced this study, Ogbu's theory has continued to be explored by other researchers following his initial research. Ogbu's theory is further explored by several researchers. Kevin Michael Foster (2004) explores the theory—while pointing out some errors in Ogbu's work—and further solidifies the theory as solid research for

educators. Eldering (1997) continues to explore the theory and extrapolates its finding to students in the Netherlands. Ogbu's theory was also further supported through this study and will serve as a useful tool for future researchers and educators. Ogbu's theory is centralized on the concept that language and vocabulary cannot be the only indicators of academic success in minority communities. This study examined minority groups who have been exposed to the same instructional strategies. By exposing minority groups from different cultural backgrounds to the same instructional strategies, we can lend credence to the concept that different cultural backgrounds affect academic performance.

These theories are vital to both the research being conducted in this study and the intended usage of the conclusions developed in the study. Several research-based reading strategies are designed to improve reading achievement. However, despite this existing research, there is still a significant achievement gap between students whose primary language is English and those who are designated as English Language Learners (NAEP Reading: National Student Group Scores and Score Gaps, 2020). This study built on Cummins' research by examining the effects of these strategies in English Language Learners. By evaluating the use of these theories on English Language Learners who are at different levels of development than those students whose primary language is English as theorized by Cummins, researchers began to determine if the instructional strategies being utilized are not effective for English Language Learners or if the strategies are being implemented at the wrong stage of language acquisition. The difference that was noticed between the different groups, provided further support for Cummins's theory.

Related Literature

Throughout this literature review, the researcher examined literature that both examined the theory presented throughout the theoretical and conceptual framework of this study as well as

literature that examined different theories related to English Language Learners and reading strategies that have been implemented with English Language Learners. The literature related to the conceptual and theoretical framework focuses on teachers' instruction in these theories as well as how various theories, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Ogbu's theory of involuntary minorities affect English Language Learners. The literature on different reading strategies focuses on the primary strategies analyzed in this study, phonics-based instruction, repeated reading, and sight word instruction.

General Education Teacher Preparedness to Serve English Language Learners

Since the conception of his theory, Cummins' research has been a fundamental theory for the education of English Language Learners (Halbach, 2012). This research has been implemented into several books and curricula in the preparation of English Language Learners. However, many students who are English Language Learners spend most of their time being instructed by general education teachers. Therefore, it is equally – if not more important – to assess general education teachers' knowledge of English Language instruction curricula and standards to ensure that students who are English Language Learners are receiving the optimal level of instruction possible.

Even though many English Language Learners are being serviced and taught full-time by general education teachers (de Jong et al., 2018), English Language Learner instruction has not always been taught in depth in all teacher preparation programs to all preservice teachers. In 2014, a study found that over 76% of teacher preparation programs in the United States are currently not meeting expectations when preparing teachers to teach English Language Learners (Li et al., 2019). Even teachers who had TESOL – teaching English to speakers of other

languages—or bilingual certifications or endorsements reported that they felt their training and preparation in the area were inadequate (Li et al., 2019).

As the number of English Language Learners has increased, there has been an increased call for reform in teacher education programs. One component of these reforms included providing more basic training for those teachers who work with English Language Learners in the general education setting (de Jong et al., 2018). Researchers found that there were several limitations to providing effective English Language Learner instructional preparation including many faculty members' lack of expertise in the subject, limited resources, limited time and scheduling difficulties, and differing levels of the initial understanding of and commitment to the preparation of teachers for English Language Learners (de Jong et al., 2018).

Phonics-Based Instruction as a Reading Strategy for English Language Learners

Systematic phonics-based instruction refers to teaching literacy based on letters and letter-sound relationships. This instruction is matched to the student's developmental level. It incorporates a scope and sequence for content delivery and various word study activities (Mesmer & Griffith, 2005). The first step of the phonics-based instructional methods requires alphabet knowledge. Before students can start reading, they must understand each letter in the English alphabet. This includes learning each letter's shape, name, and sound.

Another foundational skill in phonics-based instruction is phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness involves a student's ability to hear the sounds of different letters—or for more advanced readers' letter combinations—within different words and syllables. Knowing how to segment different letter sounds allows readers to connect different pronunciations to different graphemes, which assists readers in fluency and automaticity. One effective way of teaching these letter/sound relationships involves making associations between the letter and its

sound. For example, some educators will refer to the letter s as a snake. It is easy to mimic the slithering body movement style of a snake to make the letter s. This beginning sound also helps students memorize the letter's associated sound or phoneme (Ehri, 2020).

Once students have mastered letter-sound relationships and phonemic awareness, they are then able to begin using phonics skills to blend sounds and decode new words. Since the students have mastered letter-sound relationships and phonemic awareness, the students are expected to be able to progress to blending these sounds together to make syllables and, eventually, longer words. Decoding does not have one universally accepted definition, but general characteristics are involved in the process. Many texts also utilize the term phonological decoding. This involves the process of using letter sounds and letter-sound relationships to determine unknown words. This does not include using context to determine unknown words (Buckingham et al., 2019).

For phonics instruction to be systematic, it has to be taught with scope and sequence. Part of this sequence involves teaching letter sounds before moving on to decoding whole words. Within the letter sound phase of phonics instruction, there has to also be a sequence of how the sounds are taught. Phonics instruction typically involves starting with single letter sounds, advancing to common digraphs such as -ch and -sh, and then moving on to larger sound units such as -igh (Buckingham et al., 2019). Additionally, phonics instruction starts with more commonly used spelling and sounds and then moves on to irregularly spelled words and alternative spellings for the same said.

For phonics instruction to be explicit, the teacher must be consistent and forthcoming. Teachers should clearly state what is being taught in each phonics lesson—this has several benefits and implications for teaching. When teachers state the skill that is being taught and/or

practiced, it leaves less up to change throughout the lesson (Syuhadi, 2020). With the teacher stating what is being taught, students are more cognizant of the phonics skills in subsequent texts and materials. They are also less likely to associate letters and letter combinations with the wrong sound. This is in opposition to implicit phonics instruction in which teachers only emphasize phonemes and phonics when students have trouble in the reading activity. By being purposeful and explicit when teaching phonics, students can often move from simple phonemes to complex phonemes effectively—even if they struggle with phonemic awareness. This is important because many English Language Learners struggle with phonemic awareness (Ludwig et al., 2019).

As referenced in chapter one of this study, phonics-based instruction has long been one of the most popular and effective reading strategies utilized in the United States. Evidence has shown that reading outcomes are most favorable when implementing systematic phonics-based instruction (Ehri, 2020). Research has been conducted to determine the efficacy of phonics-based instruction as a reading strategy for English Language Learners. Most research shows that explicit phonics instruction is effective. Much of the research also suggests that phonics-based instruction for English Language Learners is most effective when utilized with other effective methods and supplemental instructional methods (Dussling, 2020). Therefore, it is important to have a complete and balanced literacy program.

Snyder et al. (2017) conducted a literature review to evaluate the literature existing regarding reading instruction and English Language Learners. In this review, phonics-based instruction was evaluated in English Language Learners throughout the National Reading Panel. Their report concluded interventions to address the five basic reading components for English Language Learners—including phonics—were successful in the general education population

but produced smaller effect sizes and necessitated additional interventions to be effective with English Language Learners.

Despite the noted difference between the outcomes of English Language Learners and students whose primary language is English, often these students are instructed in the same manner (Robinson, 2018). This includes types of interventions and instructional methods. The strategies in which English Language Learners are taught may need to change and differ from the strategies used for students whose primary language is English in order for outcomes for English Language Learners to improve. This is difficult because, despite the considerable amount of research that has been conducted on English Language Learners, there has not been a considerable amount conducted that specifically focuses on understanding which reading instructional methods are most effective for English Language Learners to support this recommendation.

Sight Word-Based Instruction as a Reading Strategy for English Language Learners

Sight word instruction has been a concept that has been around for a very long time. Sight word instruction is highly related to whole-word instruction and recognition. Although phonics-based instruction is the primary reading instructional method utilized by educators in the United States—and highly supported by research as the most effective—sight word instruction is a useful supplement to phonics-based instruction (Richardson et al., 2017). However useful, many experts have shied away from sight word instruction because sight word instruction has been associated with stimulus control errors (Richardson et al., 2017).

Sight word instruction relies on the teaching of an inventory of words that are frequently found in print (Gibbon et al., 2017). Sight words are those words that may be irregularly spelled or may involve higher-level phonics patterns (Murray et al., 2019). Despite these irregular

spellings and higher-level phonics patterns, these words are some of the most frequent in the English language. However, when students have mastered the alphabet—or have moved into the full alphabetic stage—they can begin to learn and memorize whole words without sounding them out. Instead, they utilize the full spelling of these words. When students can store these orthographic mappings—or full spellings—these words become accessible to the students in print as sight words.

Sight word instruction consists of teachers helping students to memorize the spelling of these high-frequency words and then practice fluently recognizing the words in print. By understanding the full spelling of these words, students can recognize them automatically. However, when students read these words, they are not spelling out the word each time to recognize it. These are just words they can recognize and read quickly with automaticity. Any word can be a sight word—more advanced readers can read the word rigmarole with automaticity but not necessarily because they have practiced memorizing the spelling of this word—as long as it is a word that a reader can read with automaticity (Murray et al., 2019). Often when utilizing sight word instruction, schools utilize the Dolch sight word lists or the Fry sight word lists. Some schools develop their own sight word lists as well.

Sight word instruction has been shown to be effective in improving reading fluency and is an important tool for early readers as they improve their fluency. The National Institute of Child Health and Development defines fluency as "the ability to read quickly, accurately, and with expression" (Blackwell & Laman, 2013, p.55). Sight word instruction assists with fluency in that students are not sounding out each word. When students have to sound out multiple words when reading, it slows down their reading and makes it harder for them to read with expression. It is more difficult to read with expression when one has to sound out the majority of the words

in a passage or story. Additionally, sight word mastery improves accuracy. When students do not have to sound out as many words, it is easier for them self-correct or make fewer mistakes on words they do have to sound out by using the context gained from reading the sight words accurately in a passage. Sight word instruction improves automaticity in readers, which enables them to read more fluently and thus also improves their comprehension (Gibbon et al., 2017).

Sight word instruction can happen in various ways; however, it is important that sight words are taught at the appropriate developmental stage. There are four different levels of sight word instruction: the pre-alphabetic stage, partial alphabetic stage, full alphabetic stage, and consolidated alphabetic stage (Blackwell & Laman, 2013). It is important to understand the different stages of development to know which stage students are currently in as well as having the knowledge to tailor their instruction most effectively as different instruction should be happening at the different developmental stages.

In the pre-alphabetic stage, students have generally not acquired alphabet knowledge (Blackwell & Laman, 2013). They likely will not know the different names of the letters or the sounds that the letters make. Lack of alphabet and letter knowledge does not mean that students are completely unable to learn any sight words, however. Sight words learned in this stage are learned using visual cues instead of the letters that make up the words. Sight word knowledge in this stage will likely be very limited because learners can only recognize words with distinct visual cues that help them identify the word.

In the partial alphabetic stage, students have more letter and sound knowledge. Readers in this stage will often know the names of the letters and be able to recognize them. Students will also know each letter's sounds (Ehri, 2005). Despite this knowledge of letters and letter-sound relationships, students in this stage still struggle to decode new words. This is often because

students in this stage still struggle to understand the different and more complex rules relating to vowels and other letter combinations, such as two-letter blends and digraphs (Blackwell & Laman, 2013). Students often recognize words in this stage by looking at the first and last letter, so it is still possible for students to learn sight words in this stage. However, since many words can begin and end with the same letter (for instance, cool and coal), this often leads to an inconsistent knowledge of sight words.

The next stage is the full alphabetic stage. In this stage, students not only understand the letters and sounds but also more of the rules of the alphabet and its different combinations (Blackwell & Laman, 2013). Due to this increased knowledge of the alphabet and the different rules of the letters, and the different combinations they can make, students are able to decode new and unfamiliar words in this stage. The students in this stage are no longer using partial cues. They understand the full spelling and sound relationship of a whole word and, therefore, can decode similar words such as drip and drop because they understand the place and sound relationship in each part of the decoded word (Ehri, 2020). Sight word knowledge in this stage is more consistent and students less commonly mix up sight words.

The final stage is the consolidated alphabet stage. The consolidated alphabet stage consists of students recognizing multi-letter arrangements in words as well as multisyllabic and complex words (Ehri, 2020). In this stage, students also can remember more sight words by memory. Since they have a very strong foundation of letters and letter-sound relationships, they are able to read and automate larger words that are more difficult to read. Students at this stage have a strong sight word knowledge and are normally able to assimilate larger and more complex words into the sight word realm of reading automaticity based on different patterns (Blackwell & Laman, 2013).

Sight word instruction can take many forms, such as practicing with flashcards or finding sight words in context. Other methods can include more hands-on strategies such as building sight words using Play-Doh or other tactile materials, writing sight words in different formats—such as rainbow colors, markers, and invisible ink—or tracing sight words. Different instructional formats vary according to the skills and interests of the student, but it is important to ensure sight words are being taught in the correct context and stage. Sight word instruction is most effective when taught to students in the full or consolidated alphabetic stage (Blackwell & Laman, 2013).

Guided Reading Instruction

Guided reading can be—and is considered by some teachers and educators—one of the most effective teaching methods in literacy (Ascenzi-Moreno & Quiñones, 2020). At the same time, there is also not one universal definition of guided reading. Nicholas (2022) suggests this lack of universal definition because guided reading is a complex and multilayered concept. This complex process is one in which the teacher utilizes multiple strategies in order to move students from a necessitating teacher-led practice to being able to independently exhibit student-led practice when reading.

Despite the ambiguity of the definition, there are certain aspects or techniques that most guided reading instruction includes. Guided reading is most effective when done in a small group setting. How many students constitute a small group can vary by school and organization, but generally, small group settings can be described as groups of less than 10 students. However, research has shown that guided reading is most effective with groups of 5 or fewer students (Ludwig et al., 2019). It is important when developing guided reading groups to group students

of similar abilities. However, it is also essential to ensure that the group size does not get too large as this lowers the effectiveness of the group.

Another important factor in guided reading instruction is the length of the intervention session. Guided reading is most effective when it is a shorter intervention (Ludwig et al., 2019). The length of sessions will vary based on a number of different factors. This includes what skill is being taught as well as the age and skill level of the learners in the session. It is important to note that although research shows shorter sessions as more effective than longer sessions, the instructor must be flexible to determine what exact length is necessary for that group. These sessions will generally be about thirty minutes or less.

Guided reading is a joint activity between teacher and student. Guided reading typically focuses on three different levels of activity—before, during, and after the reading of the text (Nicholas et al., 2021). During these levels, a discussion must occur between the teacher and the students. By incorporating this discussion into each reading level, students are more likely to know how to effectively utilize the different reading strategies and understand why these strategies should be used in each situation. This helps students be metacognitive in their reading process and become more confident readers.

Other reading strategies that are utilized within the guided reading model are more flexible and varied. For example, for some guided reading lessons, the teacher may employ the text-to-self-connection strategy (Nicholas, 2022). This includes the teacher presenting different aspects of the text being read and asking the student if they have any connections—similar experiences, feelings, thoughts, etc.—as the characters in the text. Some guided reading sessions employ joint reciprocal reading, where the teacher and students or several students read together. This can also be referred to as choral reading. None of these strategies are universal or have to be

included in each guided reading session. Rather, teachers should be educated and trained in various guided reading techniques. By doing this, teachers can be more intentional in their planning and instruction and align strategies with the students and texts in which these strategies would be most effective.

As previously stated, these guided reading strategies are more successful with English Language Learners. Despite this knowledge, English Language Learners are often not taught utilizing these strategies during guided reading sessions (Ascenzi-Moreno & Quiñones, 2020). When bilingual students are taught in a monolingual setting, often they are only given these modifications in one language. Recent research suggests that bilingual students may benefit from bilingual instruction. By implementing this model into the guided reading session, students have more opportunities to learn the language while they read. Additionally, this allows students to pull more fully from their existing knowledge base (Ascenzi-Moreno & Quiñones, 2020). Accessing this existing knowledge base instead of solely building a new knowledge base can improve comprehension while reading and build reading confidence.

Gaps in the Literature

Based on the existing previous research, it is reasonable to conclude that while phonics based instruction is effective, there are gaps in our knowledge base of phonics-based instruction and English Language Learners. In prior research, English Language Learners were not always separated as a distinct group of students with language needs (Snyder et al., 2017). Therefore, while recent research focuses on English Language Learners, two facets should be considered in this research. First, the research is more recent, so there is not as much research to refer to when developing instructional plans as opposed to the vast amount of research available concerning students whose primary language is English. Secondly, much of this research is based on the

methods and strategies developed for students whose primary language is English. These interventions and strategies were not geared toward English language learners; therefore, even with modification may not be the best suited for this population of students.

Another gap in the literature and research pertains to the frequency of these interventions. The previous studies that have addressed these interventions have not always measured the quantity of phonics-based instruction as related to reading outcomes; therefore, it is difficult to ascertain if or how much-increased quantities of phonics-based instruction affect English Language Learners' reading achievement (Snyder et al., 2017). It is essential to understand the quantity of the interventions being provided regularly to determine if this quantity is effective. Additionally, when knowing the baseline or median frequency of interventions that are being provided currently, it is possible to test various levels of increased intervention and determine effectiveness.

Many studies focusing on reading instruction and English Language Learners focus on a combination of some or all of the five basic components outlined by the National Reading Panel – phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and vocabulary. There are not many studies that focus on phonics exclusively without addressing other components of the reading process at the same time (Snyder et al., 2017). However, many teachers focus on phonics-based instruction in significantly different quantities than the other components of reading. It is important to have studies focusing on the frequency of intervention targeted at specific reading components to determine how to assist students with gaps in those specific reading components.

Additionally, similar to the issues addressed in the previous section, many teachers do not have the training to properly provide systematic phonics-based instruction (Ehri & Flugman,

2018). The only way to provide appropriate and comprehensive training to educators is to have a varied and extensive body of research available to develop this training. This body of research has to include specific strategies and research that targets specific components of the reading process. Additionally, this body of research has to specifically address different student populations, as different populations of learners have different learning needs. These factors necessitate continued research into phonics-based instruction and English Language Learners. This increased research will assist educators in developing highly effective instructional strategies for English Language Learners.

Reviewing the previous research also shows several gaps in the literature related to reading instruction and English Language Learners, not only in phonics but also in the area of sight word instruction. The researchers of this study utilized several databases to explore different journals to research the effectiveness of sight word instruction on the reading achievement of English Language Learners. Studies such as Kagan (2018) and Klingbeil et al. (2017) explored the effectiveness of different instructional methods, such as picture-supported flashcards, word-only flashcards, and incremental rehearsal, to teach sight words to students. However, the researchers were unable to find studies that specifically focused on the effectiveness of sight word instruction on the reading achievement of English Language Learners.

Similarly, there are gaps in the research concerning guided reading instruction and English Language Learners. There is a body of research that exists and concerns English Language Learners. However, as with the definition of guided reading, the research can be vague. There is a need for more detailed research that explicitly explores the relationship between English Language Learners and guided reading. Much of the existing research involving

guided reading and English Language Learners speaks about increasing the number of guided reading sessions or providing supplemental reading sessions in conjunction with the same strategies for students whose primary language is English (Ludwig et al., 2019). More research needs to be done that details guided reading strategies specific to this population. Additionally, research needs to be done to determine the effectiveness of the frequency of these strategies.

Summary

Although reading is a fundamental academic subject with an extensive corpus of research to inform scholarship, practice, and policy, much still remains either unknown or needs further clarification to guide the implementation of evidence-informed practice in the classroom as teachers seek the best ways to decrease the achievement gaps in a skill that underpins all others (NAEP Reading, 2020). One aspect of reading research still being studied and debated is how reading development and comprehension vary among different groups of learners. One such group that shows variations in reading development is that of English Language Learners, who often display increased deficits over other groups (NAEP Reading, 2020). The research that has been conducted in the area of reading achievement and English Language Learners highlights phonics-based instruction, guided reading, and sight word instruction as effective practices. Still, the current research does not address the degree of effectiveness for English Language Learners or how often these reading strategies need to be implemented in order to be effective. Moreover, given the increased emphasis on the science of reading (Schwartz, 2023) in literacy instruction and reading comprehension, the field of education has yet to settle the best way to teach reading, especially for underrepresented groups who tend to get caught in the politics of reading achievement instead of the science (Schwartz, 2023). This research seeks to elucidate this

important issue by focusing on the role of phonics-based, sight-word, and guided

readingpractices on the reading achievement of English Language Learners.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This quantitative, causal-comparative study aimed to measure the hypothesized effectiveness of guided reading instruction, phonics-based instruction, and sight word instruction, specifically in English Language Learners with disabilities. This chapter begins by introducing the design of the study, including full definitions of all variables. The research question and null hypothesis follow, along with a description of the study's participants, setting, and instrumentation. Chapter three concludes with research and data analysis procedures.

Design

The researcher utilized a quantitative, causal-comparative design to study the impact of research-based reading instructional strategies on the reading achievement of elementary English Learners with disabilities. Causal comparative research is a nonexperimental design that allows one to reach tentative conclusions about cause-effect relationships with variables that include already-existing conditions for the categories (Gall et al., 2007). In causal-comparative research, the researcher does not manipulate the variables being used in the study. Causal-comparative designs utilize groups that contain or do not contain a particular characteristic to make comparisons (i.e., hearing vs. deaf children), with the grouping condition already existing in the participants. The other feature of causal-comparative research that contributes to its wide use is the assessment of differences in the dependent variable that have already occurred. Not only does the factor or condition of the independent variable already exist, but the outcome of the dependent variable has already occurred, making causal-comparative research a backward-looking, ex post facto design (Field, 2018; Gall et al., 2007). One limitation of causal-comparative research is its lack of internal validity with respect to causal reasoning: Did the

independent variable influence or "cause" the dependent variable or vice versa? Without experimental randomization, causal-comparative research is correlational—changes in variables are related, not causal (Field, 2018). Nonetheless, as Astin (1993) reminds researchers and practitioners alike: Anyone who legitimizes only experimental designs will miss much in organizational life that is meaningful for practice.

This study utilized archival data from the previous year at two participating elementary schools. By doing this, the researcher did not manipulate data but analyzed it as it naturally occurred. This study contains all the elements of causal-comparative research, including an independent variable, a dependent variable, and a covariate. The independent variable in causal-comparative research is the factor in the study that is not manipulated but is a condition or grouping variable that already exists (Tuckerman & Harper, 2012). In this study, the independent variable is the different reading strategies measured— explicit phonics instruction and sight word instruction (considered together), and teacher-led guided reading. Phonics-based instruction involves a scope and sequence for content delivery and a variety of word study activities that address the different ways phonemes combine to make sounds (Mesmer & Griffith, 2005). Sight word instruction involves repeated practice with previously identified frequency words which has been shown to increase reading fluency and comprehension (Erbey et al., 2017). Sight word instruction is often used as a supplement to phonics-based instruction as opposed to being used independently (Richardson et al., 2017) which is why this study will consider the two methods together. Guided reading is a type of small group instruction that focuses on teacher-led scaffolding and problem solving, which helps address any issues that may arise during reading and ultimately improve reading comprehension and fluency (Mikita et al., 2019).

The dependent variable in the study is the variable that the researcher hypothesizes will change in relation to the independent variable (Tuckerman & Harper, 2012) which is the students' Lexile scores at the end of the current school year for the current research. The covariate in this study is the students' Lexile scores at the beginning of the current semester. Lexile scores assess a student's reading level by assigning a standardized difficulty level to different texts (Torres, 2019).

Research Question

The current study was driven by the following research question:

RQ1: Is there a difference in Lexile scores among second-grade English Language Learners based on the frequency of reading instruction methods (sight word instruction and explicit phonics instruction or guided reading instruction) while controlling for previous achievement?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis for this study is:

$H_0 1$: There is no significant difference in Lexile scores among second-grade English Language Learners based on the frequency of reading instruction methods (sight word instruction and explicit phonics instruction or guided reading instruction) while controlling for previous achievement?

Participants and Setting

The researcher used archival data on reading achievement and instruction implementation from two elementary schools in a suburban school district in Georgia. To protect the privacy of all involved parties—teachers, students, and the school district—pseudonyms will be used for the names of all people and places throughout the study.

Population

The first elementary school will be referred to as Birch Elementary. In the year of the study—2022-2023 school year—the total population of Birch Elementary was $N = 588$ students, which comprises grade levels PK-5. The largest demographic among the sample—and the school as a whole—was Hispanic. 19 percent of students came from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, as defined by the Georgia Department of Education. Eighty-one percent of students from Birch Elementary were Hispanic, 12% Asian, and 4% African American. 1% of students were White, ~1% of students identified as other.

The second elementary school will be referred to as Pine Elementary. In the year of the study, the total population of Pine Elementary was $N = 589$ students, which comprises grade levels PK-5. The largest demographic among the sample—and the school as a whole—was Hispanic. 37 percent of students came from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, as defined by the Georgia Department of Education. Fifty-nine percent of students from Birch Elementary were Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 33% African American. 3% of students were White, 2% of students identified as other.

Sampling will be conducted using a combination of school and local district demographic information. Both elementary schools were selected as schools of interest as the school district identified these schools as schools with a higher-than-average population of English Language Learners compared to the rest of the school district. Students were verified as English Language Learners by first verifying their home language status in the school district's enrollment software—Infinite Campus. Students' language test records will also be reviewed to determine English Language Learner status. Both schools utilize the ACCESS test by WIDA to determine language status. The ACCESS test determines language status by assigning tiers ("ACCESS Test

Practice and Sample Items | WIDA", 2021). Students who were placed in tiers A, B, or C on the previous year's ACCESS test were also identified as English Language Learners.

Participants

Out of this population, the researcher identified the sample of English Language Learners. The researcher further examined the sample of English Language Learners and determined which students are eligible based on attendance and instructional methods. For this study, the researcher sampled 86 students from the two elementary schools. This sample size meets the criteria of at least 66 students which according to Gall et al. (2007, p. 145) exceeds the minimum when assuming a medium effect size with a statistical power of .7 at the .05 alpha level. The researcher verified the use and frequency of instructional strategies by reviewing lesson plans submitted by classroom teachers to school administrators. The study also ensured that all participants in the sample had accessible MAP scores from the previous school year to the current school year being utilized in the study. Students who are consistently pulled out during instruction—i.e., speech therapy—did not meet the sampling criteria.

Setting

The setting for the study was a traditional school setting consisting of five days a week of in-person learning. Classroom teachers administered all reading instruction in the students' regular classrooms.

Instrumentation

The instrument that will be used in this study is the Measures of Academic Progress ® (MAP) test by the NWEA®. The purpose of this instrument in the current study was to measure students' Lexile levels. The Measures of Academic Progress ® (MAP) test was developed by the NWEA®, a non-profit, research-based organization (Torres, 2019). The instrument was

developed because the members of the organization felt there was a need for a new way to measure individual student progress (*About NWEA,* 2023). This instrument was used in numerous studies (e.g. Cordray et al., 2013; January & Ardoin, 2015; Merino & Beckman, 2010).

In this study, the constructs of the MAP test were shown to be well-defined, unidimensional equivalent across grade levels as well as having the same pattern across years (Wang et al., 2012). MAP assessments are computerized adaptive tests that are vertically scaled across grades. The reliability of the instrument was also determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The MAP test was found to have a Cronbach's alpha of .80 and was found to be reliable (Wang et al., 2012).

The number of questions varies on the MAP tests. For students in grades 2-5, the number of questions on the reading test varies from 40 to 43 questions ("MAP Test Description," 2022). The MAP test also measures reading levels on an equal interval scale by utilizing the abovementioned Lexile system ("MAP Test Description," 2022). Lexile levels assess the difficulty of a text. Lexile levels were developed using an evaluation of word frequency and the sentence length of a text. Lexile levels can range from below 200L (which denotes a beginning reader) to above 1700L, which denotes an advanced text. Lexile levels are often used to match students' appropriate difficulty levels (Kachka, 2012).

According to the NWEA® official website, Lexile scores can be used to determine student growth as well as to compare student scores to grade-level equivalents ("Using Lexile Measurements", 2020). Typical Lexile readability for kindergarten ranges from 110L to 430L, readability for first grade ranges from 190L to 460L, readability for second grade ranges from 380L to 580L, readability for third grade ranges from 510L to 700L, readability for fourth grade

ranges from 560L to 770L and readability ranges from 610L to 850L ("Using Lexile Measurements", 2020).

The MAP test is a computerized test that should be administered three times a year (fall, winter, and spring). Students should take the test and record their responses individually on a computer. Students may be allowed additional accommodations such as being administered in a small group setting. Test administrators should ensure students are given these testing accommodations based on their grade level per NWEA standards or individually if a student has an individualized educational plan (IEP), 504 plan, or another individual educational plan. The MAP test should not be timed, and students should be given as much time as needed to complete the assessment (Fleming, 2021). The MAP test is scored electronically by the website and scores are provided to the student's school via the NWEA website. The school that will be used in the study has permission to utilize the MAP instrument three times throughout the year.

Procedures

The instruction utilized by teachers was separated into two categories: those who received phonics-based instruction supplemented with sight word-based instruction more frequently than guided reading, and those who received phonics-based instruction supplemented with sight word-based instruction at a comparable frequency to guided instruction reading. Although the teachers used a variety of different instructional methods, such as incremental rehearsal or small group instruction, all of these instructional methods can fit into one of the two different categories—and did for this research study—a practice supported by (Peterson et al., 2014) and (Ehri et al., 2016). The dependent variable was the students' Lexile levels which are measured on a continuous, interval scale: fall, winter, and spring.

To determine which students received which reading strategies, the researcher examined

previously submitted lesson plans. The host school requires teachers to submit written lesson plans detailing academic instruction. These lesson plans are submitted electronically via the school's Microsoft Outlook or Microsoft Teams system. The grade level representatives at the host school provided the researcher access to these files by adding the researcher to the Outlook or Teams group. The researcher then read all submitted lesson plans to determine which plans included the instructional strategies. Some lesson plans included different instructional methods such as small group instruction or incremental rehearsal; however, the researcher ensured that these different instructional methods all fit into one of the following strategies: phonics-based instruction supplemented by sight word-based instruction or guided reading instruction.

Per IRB guidelines, the study did not include any identifying information. The data provided by the school district only included relevant information such as the student's grade, placement, and scores. The scores included the reading subject area assessment scores and sub scores as well as Lexile levels for all three administrations of the MAP test and the preceding year's spring administration scores. Data was stored on a password-protected USB flash drive and hard copies were kept in a locked safe which only the researcher had access to and a key.

The study concluded with a statistical analysis of the data and a report of findings. Three years following the completion of the study, the researcher will delete and shred all remaining data.

Data Analysis

For the inferential statistical analysis of the data, the research utilized an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The analysis of covariance was used to control for the initial differences in reading achievement growth that may have been present before the selected research-based reading instructional strategies were implemented (Field, 2018). The ANCOVA is appropriate

for this study because an ANCOVA compares data sets while at the same time controlling for one or more covariates. (Gall et al., 2007). By controlling for these initial differences, the researcher will be able to determine the actual effect of research-based reading instruction on reading achievement.

ANCOVA is appropriate to use when the independent variable is categorical with two or more groups and a dependent variable is measured on a continuous scale, either interval or ratio, and there is a continuous covariate. The independent variable in this study is reading instruction with two groups, while the dependent variable is student Lexile level, a continuously scaled measure. The continuous covariate in this study is the beginning of the semester Lexile score which controls for any initial group differences in reading achievement.

Descriptive Statistics and Data Screening

Descriptive statistics was obtained on the covariate, dependent variable, and the adjusted dependent variable for each group. Data screening was conducted on each group's covariate and dependent variable, along with visually inspecting the data to determine if there are missing data points, inconsistencies, or errors. Data screening also included box and whisker plots to detect outliers on each dependent variable.

Assumptions Testing

Prior to reporting the results of an ANCOVA, data was checked for extreme outliers and any statistical assumption violations (Warner, 2013). Assumption tests include normality, linearity, bivariate normal distribution, homogeneity of slopes, and equal variance. Normality was examined using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov since the sample surpassed 50 participants (Field, 2018). Pretest to post-test scatter plots for each group determined linearity and bivariate normality by looking for the "cigar shape" of normal distribution and linear relationships. The

researcher analyzed the homogeneity of slopes looking for no interactions between the covariate and the independent variables. Finally, Levene's Test of Equal Variance indicated if both groups had the same variance. Moreover, four additional assumptions (Barthlow et al., n.d.) were methodological considerations—and met the necessary requirements: one dependent variable, one independent variable comprising two or more categorical groups; one covariate measured at the continuous level, and independent observations.

Results for Null Hypothesis

An ANCOVA was used to assess the null hypothesis regarding the effects of research-based instructional strategies on the reading achievement of elementary English Language Learners with disabilities. The alpha level for hypothesis testing this study was set at $p < .05$. The researcher reported eta squared as the effect size. As the researcher rejected the null hypothesis, a post hoc analysis was conducted to examine the specific, individual differences among groups (Multiple Comparisons of Groups).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this quantitative, causal-comparative study was to determine the impact of reading instructional strategies at different frequencies on reading achievement. The researcher utilized the Lexile scores from the 2022-2023 administration of the MAP test at two schools. This chapter includes the research question, null hypothesis, descriptive statistics, and the results of this study.

Research Question

RQ: Is there a difference in Lexile scores among second-grade English Language Learners based on the frequency of reading instruction methods (sight word instruction and explicit phonics instruction or guided reading instruction) while controlling for previous achievement?

Null Hypothesis

H_0: There is no significant difference in Lexile scores among second-grade English Language Learners based on the frequency of reading instruction methods (sight word instruction and explicit phonics instruction or guided reading instruction) while controlling for previous achievement?

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were obtained on the covariate (beginning of semester Lexile score), dependent variable (current year's Lexile score) and the adjusted dependent variable (adjusted means for current year's Lexile score) for each group. Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3 provide the descriptive statistics.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics (Covariate)

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1 – Phonics Group	229.88	148.737	42
2 – Guided Reading Group	395.34	253.924	44
Total	314.53	224.075	86

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics (Post-test)

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1 – Phonics Group	311.67	177.175	42
2 – Guided Reading Group	592.27	246.922	44
Total	455.23	256.693	86

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics (Adjusted post-test)

| Dependent variable (adjusted means): Current Year			
Group	Mean	Std. Error	N
1 – Phonics Group	414.439	22.436	42
2 – Guided Reading Group	494.172	21.843	44

Results

Data Screening

Data screening was conducted on each group's covariate and dependent variable. The researcher sorted the data on each variable and scanned for inconsistencies. No data errors or inconsistencies were identified. Box-and-whiskers plots were used to detect outliers on the dependent variable. An outlier was identified in the pretest of the phonics group. The researcher converted the data point to a z-score, and it fell within +3 and -3 standard deviations of the sample mean (Warner, 2013, p. 153). Thus, the data point was not considered an extreme score and was maintained in the data set. See Figure 2 and Figure 3 for box and whisker plots.
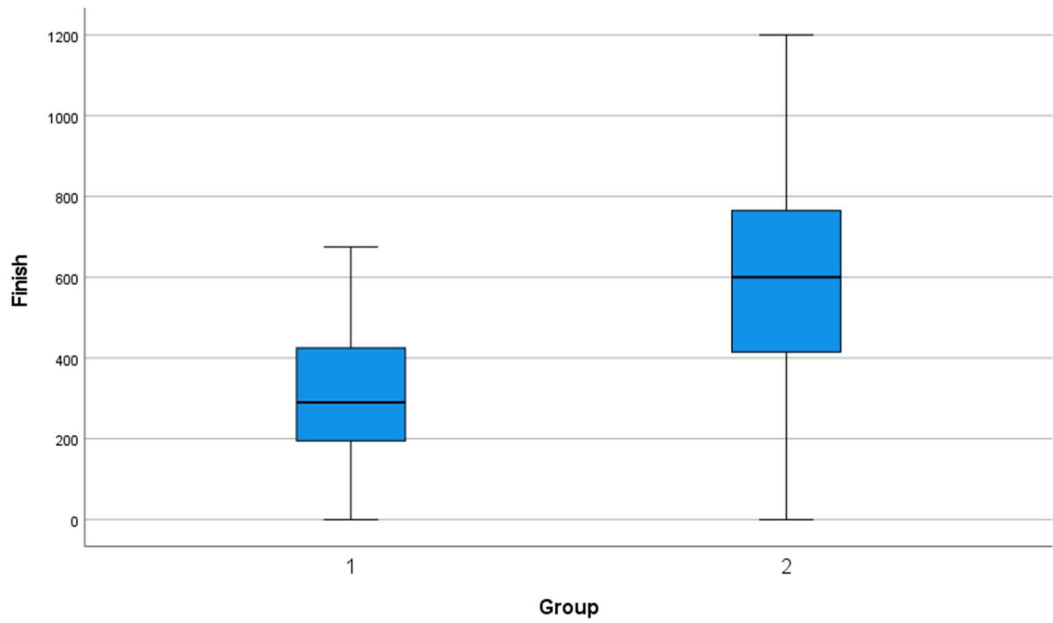
Figure 2

Box and whisker plots (covariate).
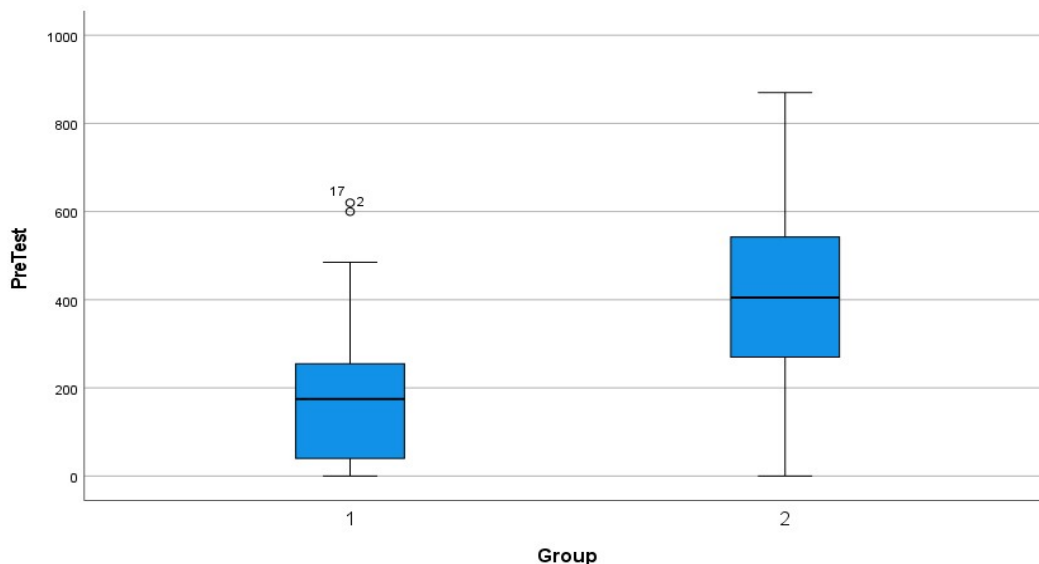
Figure 3

Box and whisker plots (dependent variable).

Assumptions

An Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the null hypothesis. The ANCOVA required that the assumptions of normality, assumption of linearity and bivariate normal distribution, assumptions of homogeneity of slopes, and the homogeneity of variance, are met.

Normality was examined using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Kolmogorov-Smirnov was used because the sample size was more than 50. No violations of normality were found. See Table 4 for tests of normality.

Table 4

Tests of Normality

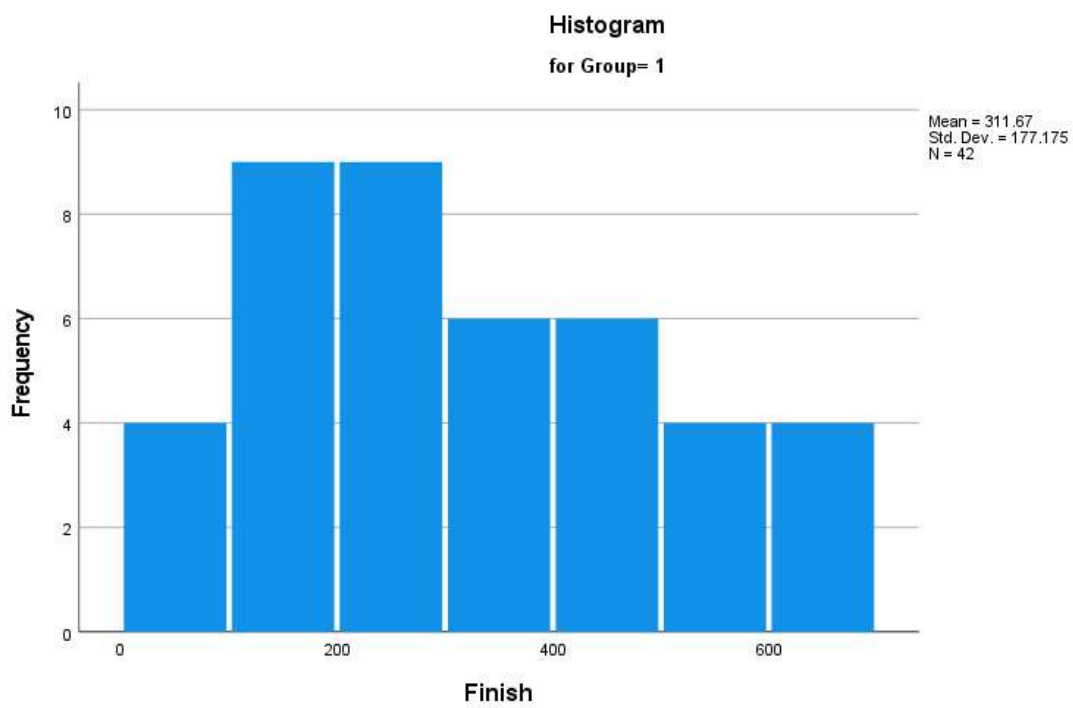|	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			
	Group	Statistic	*df*	Sig.
Finish	1	.123	42	.114

	2	.070	44	.200

Normality was also examined using histograms and normal q-q plots. Figures 4 and 5 show histograms for both groups. Both histograms display the bell curve shape and therefore met the assumption of normality.
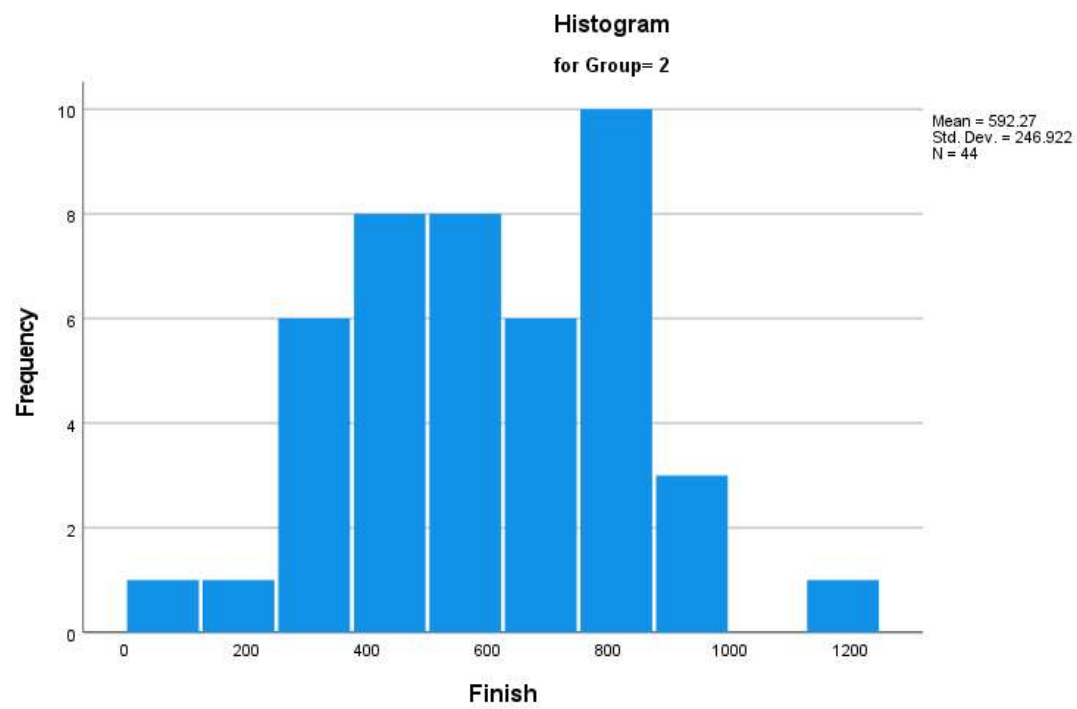
Figure 4
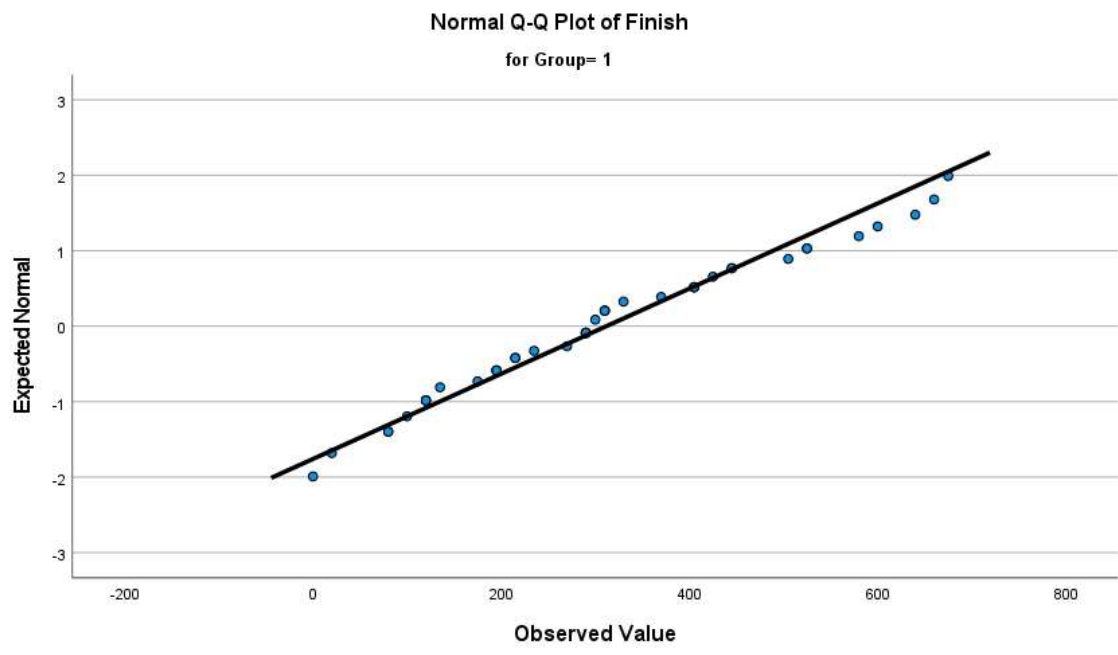
Histogram (group 1)

Figure 5

Histogram (group 2)

Normal q-q plots were also analyzed to determine normality. Figures 6 and 7 below show the normal q-q plots for groups 1 and 2. Both plots show a normal distribution along the diagonal line and met the assumption of normality.
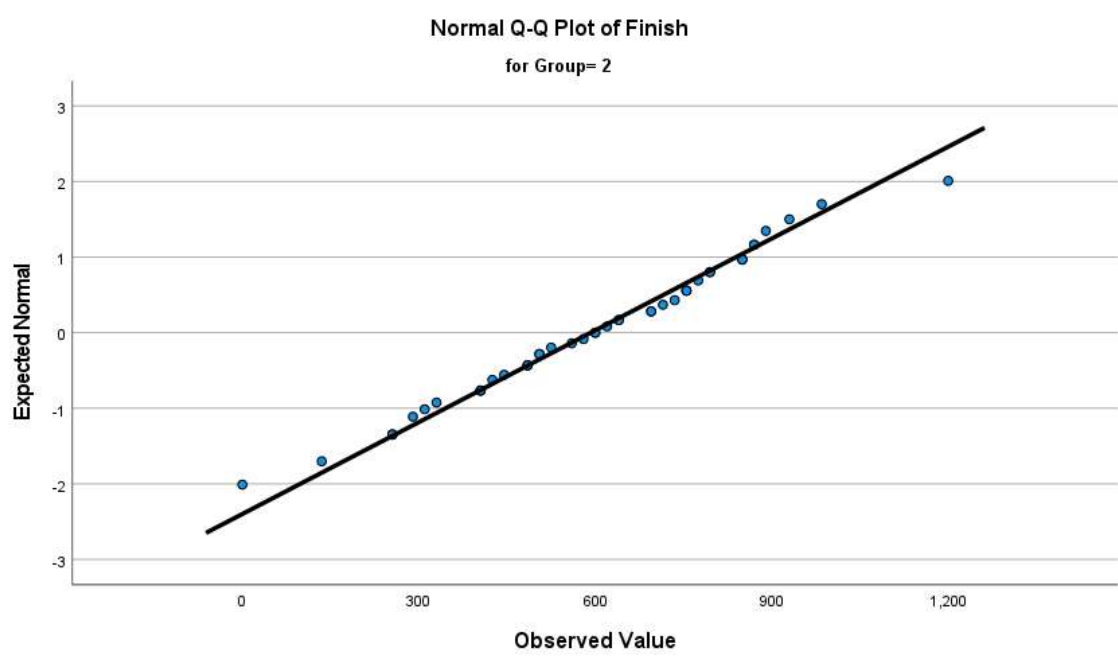
Figure 6

*Normal Q-Q Plot (group 1)*

.

Figure 7

Normal Q-Q Plot (group 2).

The assumption of linearity and bivariate normal distribution were tested using scatter plots for each group. Linearity was met, and bivariate normal distributions were tenable as the shapes of the distributions were not extreme. Figure 8 and Figure 9 include the scatter plot for each group.
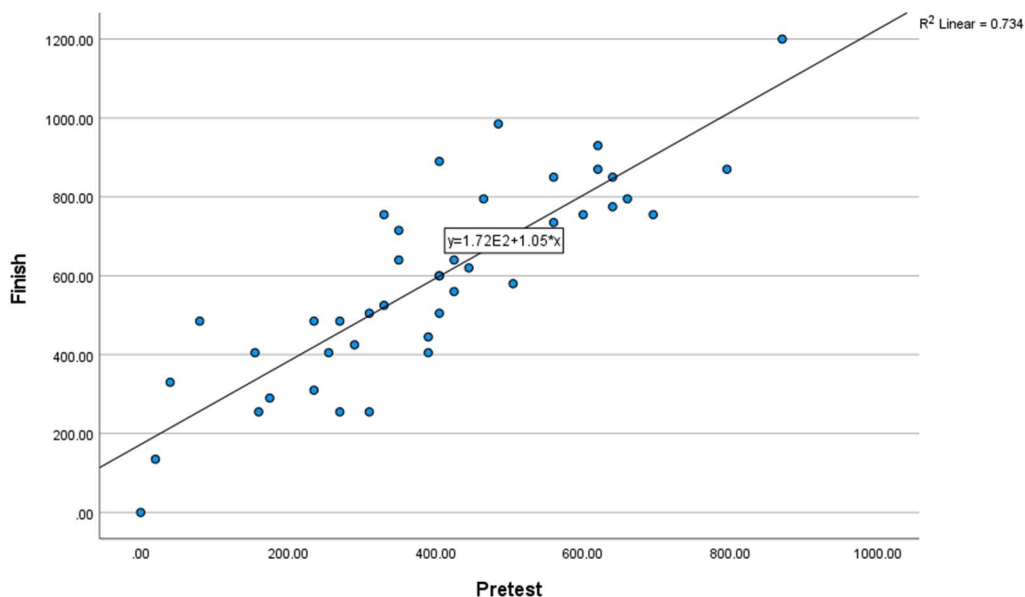
Figure 8

Scatter Plot for Group 1 – Phonics Group
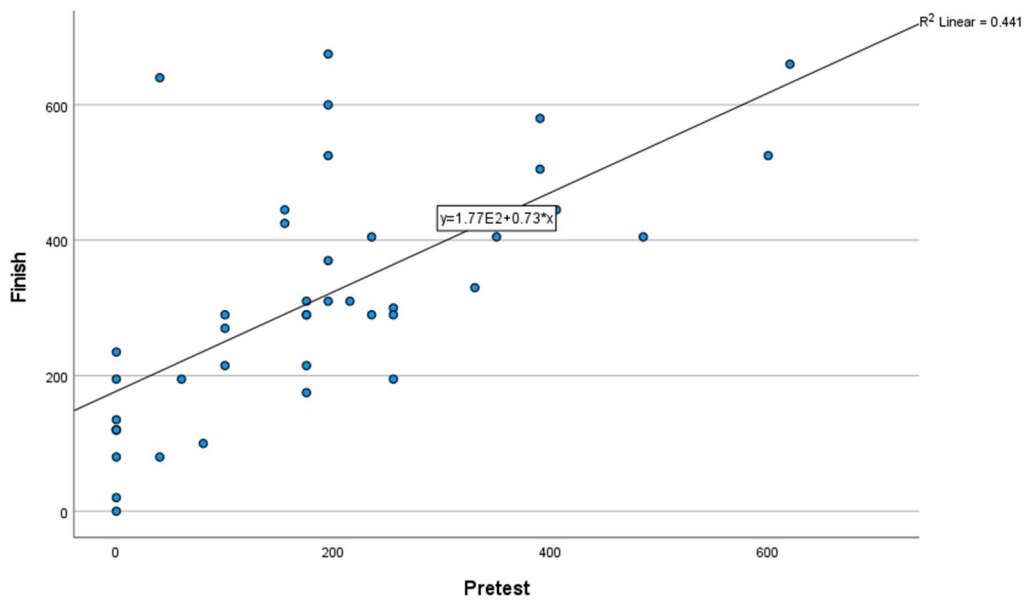
Figure 9.

Scatter Plot for Group 2 – Guided Reading Group

The assumption of homogeneity of slopes was tested, and no interaction was found where p = .053. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of slope was met. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was examined using Levene's test. No violation was found where p = .838. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was met.

Results for Null Hypothesis

An ANCOVA was used to test the null hypothesis regarding students' Lexile scores after phonics and guided reading instruction while controlling for their initial achievement—the beginning of the semester Lexile scores. The null hypothesis was rejected at a 95% confidence level where $F(21, 83)$ = 5.63, p = .020, η_p^2 = .064. The effect size was medium. Because the null was rejected, post hoc analysis was conducted using a Fishers LSD. There was a significant difference between the phonics group (M_{adj} = 414.439, $SE.$ = 22.436) and the guided reading group (M_{adj} = 494.172, $SE.$ = 21.843) See Table 5 for Multiple Comparisons of Groups.

Table 5

Multiple Comparisons of Groups

Pairwise Comparisons						
					95% Confidence Interval for Difference [b]	
(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. [b]	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-79.734[*]	33.602	.020	-146.567	-12.901
2	1	79.734*	33.602	.020	12.901	146.567

Based on estimated marginal means

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least Significant Difference (equivalent to no adjustments

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

Research has long supported the effectiveness and positive impact of guided reading instruction (Ascenzi-Moreno & Quiñones, 2020) and phonics-based instruction supported by sight word instruction (Dussling, 2020) on the reading performance of students. The current research supports increasing the frequency of these instructional strategies for English Language Learners (Snyder et al., 2017). However, it does not give specific recommendations on the frequency at which these interventions should be provided in comparison with one another (Ludwig et al., 2019). These limitations prompted the researcher to conduct this quantitative, causal-comparative study. In this chapter, the researcher discusses the results of the one-way ANCOVA and identifies implications for current practitioners. Limitations of the study are examined as related to interpreting and applying the study results. Recommendations for further research are also presented.

Discussion

The purpose of this quantitative, causal-comparative study was to examine the results of research-based reading instructional strategies that are implemented with fidelity and differing frequencies on reading achievement among minority students who are English Language Learners. This study focused on one research question. The research question was as follows: Is there a difference in Lexile scores among second-grade English Language Learners based on the frequency of reading instruction methods (sight word instruction and explicit phonics instruction or guided reading instruction) while controlling for previous achievement? The null hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference in Lexile scores among second-grade English Language Learners based on the frequency of reading instruction methods (sight word

instruction and explicit phonics instruction or guided reading instruction) while controlling for previous achievement. This study focused on two groups: a phonics group and a guided reading group. The phonics group received phonics-based instruction and sight word instruction at a higher frequency than the guided reading group. The guided reading group received guided reading instruction at the same frequency as phonics-based and sight word instruction. As illustrated in the literature review of this study, there is research that shows the effectiveness of the reading strategies examined throughout the study: guided reading and phonics-based instruction supplemented sight word instruction. This study both supports and contradicts some of this previously conducted research.

The findings of Ehri (2020) state that reading outcomes are most favorable when implementing phonics-based instruction. This study partially confirms the findings of Ehri (2020) since both groups in this study had regular, explicit phonics-based instruction and both groups exhibited growth. This study contradicts the findings of Ehri (2020) in that the two groups both utilized phonics-based instruction but one of the groups utilized guided reading at a higher frequency. According to Ehri (2020), phonics-based instruction affects reading outcomes the most, therefore the phonics based group should have shown more growth. However, this study found the group that received guided reading instruction at a higher frequency showed more growth.

Richardson et al. (2017) found that sight word instruction is a useful supplement to phonics-based instruction. This study also supports these findings as both groups received supplemental sight word instruction to support their phonics instruction. Just as there is research to support phonics-based instruction supplemented by sight word instruction, there is research to support guided reading instruction as an effective instructional strategy. The research done by

Nicholas et al. (2021) finds that guided reading instruction is effective in increasing reading achievement. These findings are also supported by this study as the group that received guided reading instruction showed the most reading achievement. Current research also supports using the instructional strategies of guided reading, phonics-based instruction, and supplemental sight word instruction in tandem with one another (Ludwig et al., 2019). This study confirms the findings of Ludwig et al. (2019) as all of the instructional methods were used in tandem with one another in both groups and both groups showed growth.

Another area that is addressed throughout this study—and perhaps one of the most essential components of the study—is that of how reading instruction for English Language Learners most differs from the reading instruction that is effective for students whose primary language is English. Dussling (2020) found that phonics-based instruction for English Language Learners is most effective when utilized with other reading instructional methods and supplemental instructional methods. This study supports the findings of Dussling (2020) by showing that phonics-based instruction is effective when combined with other methods. In this study, both groups had phonics-based instruction combined with a supplemental instructional method (sight words) as well as instruction that utilized other reading instructional methods (small group guided reading instruction). Both groups were effective and showed growth, which supports the findings of Dussling (2020). This study also expounds on that research by adding knowledge about which frequencies are effective when utilizing these instructional methods with English Language Learners.

The frequency at which these instructional strategies are implemented is essential because these instructional strategies address different aspects of reading achievement. Phonics-based instruction focuses on decoding and fluency (Syuhadi, 2020), while sight word instruction

similarly focuses on fluency and automaticity (Gibbon et al., 2017). Guided reading instruction puts an emphasis on the comprehension component of reading achievement in addition to addressing fluency (Nicholas et al., 2021). As both of these strategies address different areas of Cummins' language iceberg, both should be prioritized—with equal frequencies—in the instruction of English Language Learners. This will support the development of English Language Learners' two different language areas (basic interpersonal communicative and academic cognitive academic language proficiency skills) as per Cummins' theory. The rejection of the null hypothesis in this study supports Cummins' research. This study shows a significant difference among students who have strategies implemented to address both areas of language.

This study also lends support to the other theories explored throughout this study including Ogbu's theory of involuntary minorities and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Ogbu's theory revolves around the concept that there are structural barriers in society that lead to unequal educational opportunities for minorities. All of the students in this study were ethnic minorities (either Hispanic or Latin descent) and English Language Learners. Despite being a part of these ethnic and language subgroups, these students did not receive varied instruction from the students whose primary language was English. As this study supports the research that shows English Language Learners require different frequencies of instruction than those students whose primary language is English, it also subsequently supports the idea that not providing varied instruction for these different groups of students contributes to unequal educational opportunities for these minority students.

This study also supports Maslow's hierarchy of needs as all of the students in each group received the same instructional methods at the same frequency but within each group, there were students who performed notably lower or higher than the majority of the group. The majority of

the students in this sample came from a similar socioeconomic background and there is a relationship between lower socioeconomic backgrounds and lower academic achievement which has been theorized to be a result of deficiency needs not being met because of poverty (Noltemeyer, 2020) as per Maslow's hierarchy. The majority of the students in this study were performing below grade level which supports the connection between lower socioeconomic backgrounds and lowered academic achievement as well as Maslow's theory that until these deficiency needs are met, higher level needs such as academics also cannot be met.

Implications

This study showed that implementing guided reading instruction at the same frequency than phonics-based and sight word instruction did result in English Language Learners having a higher mean post-test achievement score. This study added to the current theory regarding English Language Learners as it supports the theoretical framework presented by Jim Cummins' regarding the different levels of English acquisition and how this affects academic achievement. This study also supports research that is built on Cummins' theory and emphasizes the importance of reading instruction that focuses on vocabulary and comprehension elements in conjunction with comprehension (Sibold, 2011).

This study also added to the current body of knowledge surrounding the different reading instructional methods addressed throughout the study. Although the difference was not statistically significant, the study showed that the phonics group also improved their post-test reading achievement. This helps strengthen the prevailing conclusion of the current research: that guided reading, phonics instruction, and sight word instruction are all effective reading strategies and that increased intervention using these methods is helpful for English Language Learners (Ludwig et al., 2019). This study expands upon that research by adding clarity to the

recommendation of increased intervention by showing that these methods are more effective when implemented in a 1:1 ratio regarding one another instead of implementing phonics instruction at a higher frequency.

This study has implications for teacher training and preparation programs as well. Current research shows that many teachers feel they have received inadequate training and knowledge when it comes to educating English Language Learners (Li et al., 2019). By utilizing the study's findings, training programs—both traditional and alternative—will have increased knowledge about which strategies are effective and at which frequency. This can be implemented into training programs, professional development, and student teaching curricula to instill better practice in the current population of educators and future educators.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to consider when applying and interpreting the results of this study. One threat to internal validity in this study was determining the trustworthiness of the reported intervention frequency. This study utilized archival data by examining lesson plans submitted from previous semesters. However, lesson plans are submitted before the intended lesson's implementation and are not updated afterward to reflect any changes that may have occurred. Changes can occur in relation to a planned lesson for different reasons (unanticipated schedule changes, the need for lesson adjustment based on student mastery of lesson objectives, etc.). Therefore, it is possible that the planned interventions were not consistently implemented at the desired frequency of the lesson plans.

There were also limitations to the study's external validity, which in turn influenced the generalizability of the study. These limitations centered on the participants, setting, and study timeframe. Most of the participants in this study were Hispanic and came from lower-class

families attending schools within the same region of the same district in a suburban Georgia area. A study that included more students from different schools, in different areas, and from different ethnic backgrounds could result in different findings. A sample that focused on a different age group or a sample that focused on different levels of English proficiency rather than age could also result in different findings. A larger sample size could also lend itself to more generalization. This study examined data over one semester. A study spanning an entire school year, or more than one school year might have produced different results.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following are recommendations for further research:

1. Further research should be done to examine the effects of a 1:1 frequency ratio of instructional strategies among English Language Learners of other age groups.

2. Further research should examine the effects of a 1:1 frequency ratio of instructional strategies among English Language Learners of similar English language proficiency.

3. Further research should be done which expands the duration of the study.

4. Further research should be done utilizing a sample that includes more students from different backgrounds and geographical areas.

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APPENDIX A

Mrs. Vickie B. Turner, Board Chair
Mr. Diljon DaCosta, Vice Chair
Mrs. Anna Hill
Mr. Marshall D. Orson
Mrs. Deirdre Pierce
Mrs. Allyson Gevertz
Dr. Joyce Morley

DeKalb County
School District

Mrs. Cheryl Watson Harris, Superintendent

Office of Continuous Improvement
Research, Data, and Evaluation

January 28, 2022
3367 Kelowna Court
Tucker GA 30084

Reference: **THE EFFECTS OF REASEARCH BASED STRATEGIES ON READING ACHEIVEMENT AMONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS** (file 2022-038)

Dear Ms. Graden:

This letter is to inform you that your research proposal has been approved by the Department of Research, Data, and Evaluation for implementation in the DeKalb County School District (DCSD).

When you begin your research you must secure the approval of the principal/chief site administrator(s) for all schools named in the proposal. You should provide the application with all required attachments and this district approval letter to the principal(s) to inform their decision. **Please remember the principal/chief site administrator has the final right of approval or denial of the research proposal at that site. In addition, note that teachers and others may elect not to participate in your research study, even though the district has granted permission.**

Please be reminded there is no data collection in schools between April 1, 2022 and June 3, 2022. The deadline is to protect instructional time during the assessment season and end of the year activities scheduled at individual schools. Also, meeting with teachers during their planning time is not acceptable and interviews need to be held during non-school hours. This approval is valid for one year from the date on this approval letter. Should there be any changes, addenda, design changes, or adverse events to the approved protocol, a request for these changes must also be submitted in writing/email to the DCSD Department of Research, Data, and Evaluation during this one-year approval period. Changes should not be initiated until written approval is received. Further, should there be a need to extend the time requested for the project, the researcher must submit a written request for approval at least one month prior to the anniversary date of the most recent approval. If the time for which approval is given expires, it will be necessary to resubmit the proposal for another review by the DCSD Research Review Board.

Completed results are **required** to be submitted to the Office of Continuous Improvement (Research, Data, and Evaluation). Feel free to call 678.676.0472 or 678.676.0325 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Mr. Oliver Lewis   Dr. Rebecca Braaten
Associate Superintendent   Director

Robert R. Freeman Administrative Complex
1701 Mountain Industrial Blvd. | Stone Mountain, GA 30083
678.676.1200 | www.dekalbschoolsga.org

APPENDIX B

[External] IRB-FY22-23-520 - Initial: Initial - Exempt

do-not-reply@cayuse.com <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>
Wed 12/7/2022 4:08 PM
To: Graden, India Chantel <icgraden@liberty.edu>;Savage, Jeffrey (Doctor of Education)
<jsavage2@liberty.edu>

[EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust
the content.]

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

December 7, 2022

India Graden
Jeffrey Savage

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-520 The effects of research-based strategies on reading achievement
amount English language learners

Dear India Graden, Jeffrey Savage,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance
with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin
your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no
further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which
human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

(4) Secondary research for which consent is not required: Secondary research uses of identifiable
private information or identifiable biospecimens, if at least one of the following criteria is met:

(ii) Information, which may include information about biospecimens, is recorded by the investigator in
such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained directly or
through identifiers linked to the subjects, the investigator does not contact the subjects, and the
investigator will not re-identify subjects;

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any
modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of
continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission
through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible