

Hamline University

**DigitalCommons@Hamline**

---

School of Education and Leadership Student  
Capstone Projects

School of Education and Leadership

---

Summer 2023

## **Curriculum Design that Supports Multilingual Learners' Literacy Development: Pairing the Science of Reading and Oral Language Development Utilizing Read-Alouds**

Eleanor Christman

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse\\_cp](https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_cp)



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

Curriculum Design that Supports Multilingual Learners' Literacy Development: Pairing  
the Science of Reading and Oral Language Development Utilizing Read-Alouds

by

Eleanor Christman

A capstone project submitting in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Education

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

August 2023

Capstone Project Facilitator: Laura Halldin

Content Expert: Margaret Dunne

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction.....	4
Personal Background.....	4
Data .....	6
Positionality.....	9
Summary.....	10
CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review.....	12
Introduction.....	12
Multilingual Learners.....	13
Reading Instruction.....	17
Intervention.....	24
Multilingual Learner Assessment.....	26
Oral Language Development.....	29
Read-Alouds.....	35
Summary.....	37
CHAPTER THREE: Project Description.....	39
Introduction.....	39
Project Description.....	39
Setting/Audience.....	44
Assessment.....	45
Summary.....	45
CHAPTER FOUR: Conclusion.....	47
Introduction.....	47

Literature Review Highlights.....	48
Implications and Limitations.....	50
Conclusion.....	52
APPENDIX A.....	54
REFERENCES.....	55

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### Personal Background

From an early age, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. I remember playing school in our basement playroom; my younger sister would be the student, and I would be the teacher. We used old desks from the high school in our neighborhood that were given to us by a family friend who worked there. Our dad got us a globe, which we used to memorize all nine continents and seven oceans. This globe now sits above my reading corner in my second grade classroom. I would give my sister tests, grade them, then pass them back out with red ink marking how many she got correct. As I grew older, I learned more about the inequities in education. During my undergraduate studies, I became more interested in following the English as a Second Language program. I felt these courses were beneficial not only to EL students but all learners in general. I now see strategies that are given as EL strategies, are really strategies that help all learners.

I remember when I was growing up, my closest friend would speak with her mother in German. I would sit in the back seat of their car and just listen to the discussion, not having a clue as to what was going on, but enjoyed every moment of the interaction. The translanguaging happening in the conversation was amazing, communicating in German, and switching to English every so often. Only then could I get a glimpse into their conversation. I always admired my friend for knowing more than one language. I attempted to learn another language starting in middle school. I took Spanish courses from 6th to 11th grade, which I then dropped the course because I had reached the graduation requirement. Although I did not fall in love with learning a new

language, I did learn about how hard it was to learn a new language, let alone communicate, and my interest in language education grew.

I really enjoyed school. However, I was not much of a reader. I remember dreading reading logs and reading at home. I never got into the Harry Potter books or the Hunger Games series that were all the rage when I was in elementary and middle school. As I grew older and became a teacher, I always wondered what happened. Why did I hate reading? As a teacher now, I love reading and I emphasize the importance of reading and want all of my students to fall in love with reading so they are able to feel and be successful in school. The majority of my students this year came into the second grade as high risk readers, well below grade level and at or below the tenth national percentile in reading test scores. I know that my job is to make sure all my students see significant growth in reading so they do not fall further behind, and this research will help me become a better reading teacher.

As I started my undergraduate career in Madison, Wisconsin, I fell in love with learning about the education system. I had the opportunity to learn from amazing researchers and professors such as Mariana Pacheco, who taught me the importance of bilingualism and having an asset based mindset. I learned that having high expectations for students is necessary for their success and that each learner brings their own unique repertoire of language and their own funds of knowledge to the classroom that we can build on as teachers. During my undergraduate studies, I read works by Gloria Ladson-Billings, a University of Wisconsin professor, researcher, and great educational theorist who is known for her work with culturally relevant pedagogy and critical race

theory. This program helped form my philosophy around education and gave me the knowledge I needed to continue in the education field.

As a teacher, my goal is for students to achieve academically so they can choose to do whatever they want to in life. I work hard to make sure my lessons are prepared for student engagement and learning. I also spend a lot of time outside of school hours preparing for small group and whole group instruction so that these are differentiated for students and support learning development. This is why I want to create a curriculum that works with what I am already teaching. The curriculum would be paired with a scientific approach to teaching reading so that teachers know it aligns with what they are doing in the classroom and with science based instructional approaches. Building this curriculum will allow teachers to not have to spend time picking out read-alouds and knowing which questions to ask based on what level students are at. Focusing on oral language will ultimately help student reading proficiency. I hope to create a curriculum that supports teachers that are already working past their work hours so they have one less thing to create. I have seen success using the science of reading curriculum I have with my multilingual students. However, I want to explore the importance and best practices of oral language development to see how that would add to my multilingual student's reading proficiency.

### **Data**

According to the Minnesota Department of Education (2020), 83.7% of students in Minnesota graduated from high school in 2019. The graduation rate for English Learners was 67.2% (Minnesota Department of Education, 2020). English Language Learners (ELLs) are defined as “students who enter schools with a first language other

than English and therefore need to increase their English proficiency in order to meet the academic demands of schools” (Roy-Campbell, 2013, p. 257). This data tells us that ELL students are being underserved in our Minnesota schools. 73.3% of current EL students are not meeting state reading standards (Minnesota Department of Education, 2020). Once EL students pass the WIDA Access tests and are no longer considered ELs, this drops from 73.3% to 22.9%, which is similar to their English-only peers, at 23.5%. 66.2% of students labeled EL graduate highschool in four years compared to students who are not labeled EL who have a four-year graduation rate of 85%. It is important to look at the graduation rate of EL students because when teaching in elementary grades, the long term goal is for students to exit out of EL programs and graduate high school.

Reading is an essential part of learning, and it is a prerequisite for independent learning. Early elementary-aged students are in the process of learning how to read so that they can then read to learn. Reading ability is directly linked to economic success and independence. So, why is it that many of our students in the United States are not proficient in reading? This is especially true for multilingual students in the United States. My area of focus for this project is best practices for teaching multilingual learners (ML) how to read. This topic is important to me because I serve many ML learners, and I want to make sure what I am doing in the classroom is working and are best practices. This topic is professionally significant because there is a debate about promising practices to teach monolingual students how to read, the science of reading or whole language approach, and figuring out best practices for my students is important. Teaching students how to read is one of the main parts of my job, therefore, knowing what works and what does not is key. It is within my control to impact this area of focus



because I choose how to teach and what to teach students. The activities and lessons I give students are within my control; even if I have to follow a curriculum, I am able to be flexible with that and supplement materials.

The Minnesota Department of Education data from above may be due to many factors, which will be addressed in the literature review in Chapter Two of this project. One factor is teacher knowledge on how to best support EL students in the classroom. Academic success is often tracked with students starting at a young age. Teachers start seeing labels such as high risk, some risk, low risk on student data starting in second grade on state standardized assessments. These are predictors of student graduation rates and academic achievement. This means it is important for students to stay out of the risk categories so that it does not stick with them in the higher grades. For these reasons, I want to create a curriculum that supports struggling readers. This capstone project will look at promising practices for teaching ELs how to read and pairing it with oral language development, with the hope that EL students are more likely to exit out of EL programs.

It is important for teachers to know what works for teaching students how to read. This can be done by basing their classroom practices off of scientific research on the brain and how it learns to read. There has been ample debate and research surrounding the best practices for teaching reading. One major method for teaching reading is using the science of reading, an explicit and systematic approach to teaching phonics and phonemic awareness. My current reading curriculum, The Groves Method, was created using the science of reading. The Groves Method is a literacy curriculum that is grounded in scientific research and is focused on strategies that have helped students with dyslexia,

ADHD and other executive functioning challenges. “It is our mission to build confidence, success, and purpose through transformative learning experiences. We combine evidence-based learning with the art of teaching to make learning an inspiring experience for all students” (Groves Learning Organization, 2023, para 2). We do whole group and small group instruction using the Groves Method. However, there are key components of teaching reading that support multilingual learners, such as oral language development, that are not extremely present in the Groves curriculum materials. That is why I would like to create a read aloud curriculum that supports the Groves Method and also supports oral language development, specifically in multilingual learners. As teachers, it is important we provide students with ample opportunities to engage in learning that supports reading development in a holistic way.

In my capstone project I will address the importance of pairing a science of reading curriculum with targeted oral language development and its impacts on multilingual students' reading abilities. The purpose of this study is to determine best practices for teaching multilingual learners how to read. The research question I will focus on is *how are multilingual students' reading skills enhanced by pairing a science of reading phonics program with a focus on oral language development?*

### **Positionality**

I am a second grade elementary education teacher teaching in a midwest, urban setting. I am interested in addressing the inequities in the education system when it comes to teaching ELs. However, I did not experience these inequities first hand because I am not an EL myself. I identify as a white, cis-gender female. I come from an upper-middle class neighborhood that is predominately white. English is the only language I speak, so I

lack understanding of the perspective of a multilingual learner. I want to understand more about ML student experiences in learning how to read and the best practices that have shown the highest levels of academic achievement. This project will help me find strategies and practices that have worked so I can best support my ML students in the classroom. I will focus on 2nd grade elementary reading practices because those will be most helpful to me, and it will set a stage for how to support ML students in elementary school so that they can achieve academic success in the future.

Another area of my identity has to do with my socio-economic status (SES). My SES does not match the SES of students I currently teach, which is who is in my mind while I write my literature review and do the capstone project. I come from an upper-middle class family and I teach at a Title I school. I think SES plays a big role in life, education, and learning. I was raised in a way that matched the specific norms of the educational system because of my race and class. My parents provided a stable place to live where I did not have to worry about basic needs such as food and housing. These factors play a role in education and affect how I view and experience the education system.

### **Summary**

This chapter opens with an explanation about English Learners academic achievement in Minnesota Classrooms. Then, it describes the importance for teachers to be well equipped to teach all students how to read. Next, I illustrate why I am passionate about the topic of multilingual learner academic success and teaching students how to read. The chapter closes with stating the purpose of this capstone project, which is to determine best practices for teaching multilingual learners how to read. Multilingual

learners are the focus of this capstone project because practices that support ML students are practices that support all students. In my capstone project I will address the importance of pairing a science of reading curriculum with targeted oral language development and its impacts on multilingual students' reading abilities. The research question is *how are multilingual students' reading skills enhanced by pairing a science of reading phonics program with a focus on oral language development?*

Chapter Two will dive into literature surrounding the science of reading to give insight on the best practices to teaching students how to read. It will then explore oral language development and how it relates to the science of reading. Next, it will investigate best practices for teaching multilingual students and how to develop oral language, positive impacts of bilingualism, and validity in assessment. Chapter Three will be the project description, with an introduction, explanation of the setting and audience, timeline of the project, and assessment description.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

This capstone project will address the importance of pairing a science of reading curriculum with targeted oral language development and how it impacts multilingual students' reading abilities. The research question I will focus on is *how are multilingual students' reading skills enhanced by pairing a science of reading phonics program with a focus on oral language development?*

Therefore, the four sections of this literature review are: multilingual learners, reading instruction, multilingual learner assessment, and oral language development. Multilingual learners are the focal students of this research question. The research question focuses on best practices for reading instruction, and for that reason there will be a reading instruction section. The section on assessment relates to the research question because assessment is used to measure if teaching practices are working. Lastly, a section will focus on oral language development because the research question asks for best practices when it comes to developing students' oral language so that it improves student literacy proficiency.

This literature review will first take a look at who multilingual learners are and how they have been represented in the education system. Themes in the multilingual learners (MLs) section include the population of MLs in the education system, ML families, school support, relationships amongst school community members, social emotional development, and it will end with academic achievement. Then, the literature review will discuss the research surrounding reading instructional practices that best

support MLs. The reading instruction section will talk about phonics-based and whole language approaches to instruction, academic achievement, vocabulary development, biliteracy framework, and intervention. Next, the literature review will discuss multilingual learner assessment, specifically the validity of assessment when it comes to MLs. This section will critique standardized assessment of MLs and provide suggestions for improvement. Finally, the literature review section on oral language development will discuss how oral language plays a role in literacy proficiency and best practices for supporting oral language development in the classroom. This section will end with information about read-alouds and how to use read-alouds in the classroom to support literacy development, specifically comprehension and oral language.

### **Multilingual Learners**

In 2019, 10.4% of public school students were labeled as English Language Learners (ELLs) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). The English Language Learner population is growing, however, the academic performance of ELLs is continually showing lower academic achievement compared to monolingual peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). Therefore, it is important for educators to address this concern in their teaching. According to the US Department of Education (Our Nation's English Learners, n.d.), ELLs in U.S. public schools speak 400 different languages. In this literature review, unless another acronym is used by an author, the ELL students will be referred to as multilingual learners (MLs), because in some cases, students are learning one or more languages and the term ML encompasses more student experiences.

Niehaus and Adelson (2014) claim schools need to provide MLs with more support to attain higher levels of academic success and social emotional well-being, and

that these supports need to start at a young age. Therefore, they did a study that examined the relationships of parents and school support, parental-school involvement and academic and social-emotional outcomes for ML students. They found that MLs had lower achievement and more social-emotional concerns when they attended schools that provided more support services (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014). They also found parental involvement was more strongly related to social-emotional skills than to academic achievement (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014, p. 835). Niehaus and Adelson (2014) described various reasons for their findings that may not relate to direct parent involvement. For example, public schools, Title I schools, and schools with larger student enrollments, more minority students, and more ELL students provided more support for ELL students and families. In addition, ELL students had lower levels of achievement when they were from lower socioeconomic-status backgrounds and when they received support services at schools such as in-class ESL, pull-out ESL or Title I ESL/bilingual (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014, pp. 830-831). That means that parental involvement may not be a causal factor in this relationship, but schools may need to find ways to work together with families to figure out how to support students academically.

Niehaus and Adelson (2014) suggest school administrators and teachers should focus on creating spaces to support ML parent involvement in school, such as providing interpreters, multilingual communication, and special meetings to discuss parent roles in education. In another source, this point is supported by explaining that when responsibility of an ML student's well being is seen as solely the responsibility of the English Language Development (ELD) teacher, the gap between home and school grows (Brooks et al., 2010). Therefore, Brooks et al. (2010) argues that more should be done

than interpreters, multilingual communication and grading policies. Additionally, it is important to address the integration of culture into the curriculum and focus on EL student marginalization in schools. Brooks et al. (2010) indicates this starts to happen when administrators begin to see their responsibility and relationship with ML students as important and necessary.

Similar to Books et al. (2010), Roy-Campbell (2013) believes all teachers, not just English Language Development (ELD) teachers, need to be prepared to teach MLs, and that ML academic success is the responsibility of all teachers. In the United States, 70% of states require some kind of ML courses in their teacher-preparation programs for general education teachers, and less than 8% of states have explicit certification requirements for all teachers (Roy-Campbell, 2013, p. 260). In the Roy-Campbell (2013) study, after researching how prepared general education teachers were for understanding how to teach multilingual students, it was concluded that more formal preparation in teaching MLs is needed.

Case (2015) examined interactions between MLs and non-MLs and found that language played a key role, but communication obstacles were taken with anticipation and were resolved, and ultimately led to building a relationship. This is key insight as to how relationships are built between MLs and non-MLs, and how to best support these developments. Case (2015) explains that the students in their study took two approaches to working together: through closing the gap from language barriers and opening spaces. *Closing the gap* is described as making sure everyone understands while *opening spaces* describes conversation, story telling, and shared experiences. Through these observations,



it was clear that a positive relationship formed despite a language barrier and promoted the idea of thinking of another's perspective (Case, 2015, p. 380).

Brooks et al. (2010) believe change needs to happen in school communities that addresses the ways in which ML students have been perceived and treated to become welcomed, valued, and integral parts of the school community. Similarly, Walqui and Heritage (2018) explain that if MLs are going to productively participate in classroom interactions and learning, teachers need to create a trusting classroom culture where students feel comfortable to speak, are valued, and respected (Walqui & Heritage, 2018).

Niehaus and Adelson (2014) suggest that schools need to focus on ML students' social and emotional development because it can be associated with lower academic achievement. Social and emotional development happens when students have positive and healthy interactions with their peers. Studies suggest there are potential positive outcomes for MLs when they have interactions with their monolingual peers (as cited in Case, 2015, p. 362) such as academic learning, cross-cultural understanding, and friendship. This relates to the findings in another source that says, in multiple studies, students who have more positive peer relationships tend to achieve at higher levels (as cited in Niehaus & Adelson, 2014).

As Brooks et al. (2010) explain, cross-cultural understanding is necessary in order for ML students to feel welcomed and valued in the school community. In order to best support ML students with feeling comfortable with speaking in the classroom, Walqui and Heritage (2018) suggest that teachers set a clear purpose, make sure students have background knowledge to support their ideas, focus on the development of complex language, support pronunciation, and provide ways for students to organize their

thoughts. Productive talk is necessary for students to participate in for their language to grow. Productive talk has depth, is sustained, and is student controlled (Walqui & Heritage, 2018). Through the use of oral language development strategies like the ones listed above, teachers can provide a space for ML students to feel comfortable speaking in the classroom, which will not only develop their English language development but also provide opportunities for more classroom connections between MLs and their English-only peers.

Furthermore, Niehaus and Adelson (2014) explain it is difficult to distinguish support services from school characteristics associated with low achievement. Therefore, this explains their study's contradictory results regarding parent involvement and student social-emotional well-being and academic achievement. The correlation between social-well being and academic success is an extremely complex relationship, leading to many limitations in just Niehaus and Adelson (2014). However, there is room for improvement in strategies that teachers use to support MLs' academic achievement.

### **Reading Instruction**

According to the NCES report, just 69% of all 4th grade students were reading at grade level in 2015 (as cited in Zugel, 2020, p. 58). This means that reading instructional methods need to be evaluated. There are two major forms of instruction when it comes to literacy: phonics-based instruction and whole language approach. The research suggests that phonics-based instruction is more effective than the whole language approach, which will be addressed in this section. This section will discuss phonics-based instruction, whole language approach, comprehension, and vocabulary development. First, terms such as phonics-based, phonemic awareness, whole language, comprehension, word

recognition, and biliteracy framework will be defined. It will then dive into what studies have found that support the use of phonics instruction and what is needed for reading comprehension. Many studies show similar yet different variations of literacy instruction; therefore, this section will analyze the similarities and differences, and it will overview arguments for best practices for literacy instruction.

*Phonics-based instruction* is defined as “explicit and systematic instruction of sound-symbol correspondences, expected to lead to eventual comprehension mastery” (Robinson, 2018, p. 26). *Whole language approach* is defined as “using indirect learning by having students memorize whole words and figure out other words through immersion in texts, to experience one’s own understanding and appreciation of written content” (Robinson, 2018, p. 26). Additional key terms in this section are *decoding* and *comprehension*. Decoding is the ability to connect letters and sounds to read words, and comprehension is the ability to make meaning from oral or written language (Silverman et al., 2020).

A study done by Robinson (2018) compares phonics-based instruction with whole language instruction after seeing a notable difference in student proficiency scores from first to second grade due to shift in instructional methods. The two questions this study addresses are: do the reading methods, phonics, whole language and intensive phonics have significantly different effects on reading achievement? Additionally, can incorporating direct skills instruction into a reading program cause significant gains for below-grade level as well as average and above-grade level students? Robinson (2018) found that an intensive phonics instruction which includes direct teaching of skills and

practice was more effective for ELL student reading scores than whole language instruction and intensive phonics instruction.

Zugel (2020) conducted a study that examined the combined reading curriculum (CRC) which contained phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. They combined Words Their Way (WTW), a systematic spelling, phonics and vocabulary curriculum, and Short Stories, a collection of short stories that contains all the words from WTW, to create a curriculum that focused on the key components of a well rounded reading instructional program. Next, Zugel evaluated the effectiveness of the CRC for ML and non-ML students in comparison to the control group. They found that ML students made significant gains in spelling and reading scores after being taught using the CRC. When comparing the CRC model with the control group, there was not a significant difference between student's spelling scores who received CRC and those who did not. However, there was a significant difference in reading between those who were taught using the CRC and those who were not. Therefore, the CRC helped students learn how to read more effectively than the control group instruction. Zugel (2020) claims the CRC model was significantly more effective in reading because of its comprehensive approach to instruction. Thus, Zugel argues that it is important for teachers to provide texts that have words from word lists that students are studying to ensure that students are practicing the phonics and spelling patterns that are being taught, practicing vocabulary in context, and reading developmentally appropriate text at their instructional level.

Ardasheva et al. (2021) examined direct and indirect effects of science vocabulary and morphosyntactic awareness on ML students' reading comprehension ability. They

claim that morphology knowledge “may help students access meanings of the linguistically complex science vocabulary which tends to be multimorphemic” (p. 952). However, they also found morphosyntactic awareness did not contribute to greater science comprehension beyond the science vocabulary. A study done by Hwang and Duke (2020) examined the role of science domain knowledge, reading motivation, and decoding skills in reading comprehension. This study compared multilingual and monolingual students. They found decoding skills were the second largest factor when evaluating ML students’ reading comprehension. They also found science domain knowledge was the largest factor associated with higher reading comprehension for ELs and monolingual students. This is similar to what Ardasheva et al. (2021) found in their study, that morphosyntactic awareness improved science vocabulary, which is associated with science reading comprehension. Ardasheva et al. (2021) explains that domain-specific vocabulary knowledge addressed the disparity between monolingual and ML students’ science reading comprehension. This is similar to Hwang and Duke (2020) who explain science domain knowledge was a more important aspect in reading comprehension development of MLs than in monolingual students.

The Ardasheva et al. (2021) study suggests teachers should provide support to teach ELs discipline-specific academic vocabulary in science and should use morphology to teach students meaning of words and how to relate words. Hwang and Duke (2020) suggest building students’ science domain vocabulary and activating background knowledge will help reading comprehension. Based on their findings, Hwang and Duke (2020) also suggest explicit instruction for both MLs and monolingual students to support decoding. This includes simple and complex letter-sound correspondences, word

recognition strategies, and application of learning. Furthermore, Silverman et al. (2020) found when comparing vocabulary intervention for ML and non-ML students, there were greater comprehension effects for ML students.

Research suggests ML students are best served in a school where both languages are used for instruction (as cited in Escamilla et al., 2021) However, that is not the reality for most ML students. Escamilla et al. (2021) discuss how student's home languages can be used to help educate MLs in English medium classrooms. They go on to say that a biliteracy framework "encourages the recognition and use of a student's entire linguistic repertoire in service to language and literacy acquisition with a particular focus on helping students make cross-language connections" (Escamilla et al., 2021, p. 364). Escamilla et al. claim bilingualism can be developed and trained in monolingual environments to increase language and content knowledge learning. This relates to Goldenberg (2020) who suggests, "instruction should take into account challenges and opportunities of students' cultural resources" (p. 133). However, Goldenberg (2020) emphasizes that prioritizing culturally appropriate instruction at the expense of ELD and critical literacy skills should not happen. Instead, they suggest culture is a lived experience of students regardless of where the experience originates. They emphasize the importance of learning outcomes and their studies found, with the exception of socioeconomic status, there is little evidence that suggest cultural factors influence EL's literacy development (as cited in Goldenberg, 2020).

The Biliteracy framework includes direct and explicit instruction in daily literacy instruction that includes oracy, reading, writing, and explicit teaching of metalinguistic skills (Escamilla et al., 2021). The framework suggests that teachers make intentional and

explicit cross-language connections and consider if material that is selected honors all students' cultures and languages. Silverman et al. (2020) suggests that teachers should find ways to include discussion and writing outside of literacy instruction to support content and language comprehension.

Silverman et al. (2020) reviewed studies that have been done on comprehension interventions in the elementary classroom. They explain that decoding and comprehension are developed separately, and that the science of reading solely focuses on decoding; however, comprehension needs to also have instructional time in the classroom. Silverman et al. (2020) claim that language comprehension is an important component of reading and it develops alongside decoding. Multiple studies suggest that comprehension becomes more and more important for readers as they get older, thus, emphasis and intervention in decoding should happen in the earlier grades (Silverman et al., 2020; Hwang & Duke, 2020). Furthermore, Hwang and Duke (2020) emphasize the importance of, “not focusing on basic word reading skills at the expense of developing content knowledge” (p. 13).

Silverman et al. (2020) examined interventions for reading comprehension that focused on vocabulary, morphology, syntax and decoding. They found that vocabulary intervention was most successful when done in a whole group setting. The authors find that interventions that had more than one component (vocabulary, semantics, morphology and syntax) had a higher effect on student comprehension than interventions that focused on one component. This is further justified by explaining that “interventions that included morphology tended to have higher effects on vocabulary and interventions that included syntax tended to have higher effects on reading comprehension” (Silverman et al., 2020,

p. 220). This relates to the study by Ardasheva et al. (2021) that suggests morphology is an important component of reading comprehension and instruction.

Many studies support the claim that more needs to occur than just phonics-based instruction in order for ML students to have a well-rounded literacy education that supports their overall reading skills such as decoding and comprehension. Silverman et al. (2020) found that “language comprehension interventions did not show effects on decoding, suggesting that language comprehension and decoding instruction may not be reciprocal” (p. 229). Escamilla et al. (2021) explain that the Biliteracy framework should be used complementary with phonics centered literacy teaching. This framework suggests one fourth of the literacy block be focused on oracy and another fourth on metalinguistic awareness. This connects to the findings in Robinson (2018) that an intensive phonics instruction program is most effective for ML students; however, Escamilla et al. (2021) goes beyond the phonics instruction to incorporate students’ first language. Similarly, Silverman et al. (2020) believes the science of reading should include more attention to language and reading comprehension instruction. In addition, Zugel (2020) believes the CRC framework was beneficial because of its comprehensive framework. Additionally, Goldenberg (2020) explains that the science of reading is necessary but is not enough.

Goldenberg (2020) examined how teachers teach reading to MLs in English Only instructional programs. They want to build oral language development into the science of reading so that ML literacy development is adequate. They argue English literacy and oral language proficiency need to be priorities in order for students to have equitable academic and social opportunities. They also argue oral language development needs to be planned and explicit, and teachers should not rely on ELD instruction for oral



language development. There were three main findings and these include, learning to read in a language that is alphabetic orthography similar to your L1 requires skills and understanding about alphabetic principle; MLs need additional instruction and support in learning English vocabulary; and as students progress through grades they are expected to read more complex texts so oral language instruction needs to mirror the reading to be complex and demanding.

Goldenberg (2020) explains that successful literacy programs go beyond foundational skills of reading such as phonological awareness, letter-sound mapping, phonics, and decoding and involves understanding the text. Therefore, words and their meanings, speech processes, and syntax are important for ELs to learn and understand at an earlier age than most assume. Goldenberg (2020) explains how it is harder to learn how to read when you do not understand the words. In addition, they explain that students progress through grades, texts become increasingly complex therefore, oral language instruction and support must also become increasingly complex. This connects to the claim made above by Silverman et al. (2020) and Hwang and Duke (2020) that suggest comprehension becomes more and more important for readers as they get older. Overall, Goldenberg (2020), Silverman et al. (2020) and Hwang and Duke (2020) suggest there is need for comprehension instruction in younger grades and the importance of addressing low achieving students in younger grades will support students as they grow in the upper grades when they are reading to learn instead of learning to read.

### ***Intervention***

Dussling (2020) explains that ELLs have historically scored lower than Native-English speaking peers on academic assessments. A study done by Dussling

(2020) had the goal of expanding the research on reading intervention for ELLs, especially those who speak languages other than Spanish. Dussling wanted to know the effects of small group instruction intervention given to ELs and Native-English speaking students. Their two research questions focused on whether supplemental lessons were effective for both non-Spanish speaking ELLs and native English-speakers as well as if intervention programs are effective for both ELLs and native English-speakers when disaggregated by language (Dussling, 2020). The purpose was to see if intervention with a focus on phoneme awareness and phonics in small group settings would impact different students in the same way. The results show that all participants made growth during the intervention on blending, segmenting, letter sound knowledge, word identification, word attack, and spelling, regardless if the student was non-EL or EL (Dussling, 2020). This is similar to the findings from Kamps et al. (2007) that also explains there were no significant differences between EL and non-EL performance after direct instruction intervention.

A study from Kamps et al. (2007) looked at how EL students responded to tier-two small group intervention comparing balanced literacy and phonics and phonemic awareness. The comparison group focused on word study, story reading, and writing activities, which describes a balanced literacy approach to teaching reading. The experimental group focused on explicit and systematic instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness, sound recognition, alphabetic decoding, fluency and comprehension skills, which describes a phonics-based approach to teaching reading. The study found that ML students had better reading outcomes in the experimental schools rather than the comparison school. It found that there were significant gains in decoding

and oral reading skills as well as the direct instruction interventions being highly effective for ML groups (Kamps et al., 2007). Kamps et al. (2007) suggests that further intervention on oral reading fluency is needed, which connects to Goldenberg (2020) claims that oral language development needs to be explicitly taught to EL students to support their literacy development.

Moreover, Kamps et al. (2007) suggest that reading intervention occurs early so that students do not fall further behind as they move forward in their education. This is similar to the findings in other studies that suggest addressing literacy problems earlier is more beneficial in the long run (Silverman et al., 2020; Hwang & Duke, 2020; Goldenberg, 2020). Overall, many studies have similar findings that what benefits ML students also benefits non-ML students (Dussling, 2020; Goldenberg, 2020; Silverman et al., 2020; Ardasheva et al., 2021; Kamps et al., 2007). Dussling (2020) suggests that teachers combine ML and non-ML students in their intervention groups because both groups benefit from the same instructional practices and promote inclusion.

### **Multilingual Learner Assessment**

This section will discuss how MLs have been assessed in the education system. It will specifically look at standardized assessments, validity and reliability of assessment, suggestions for change, and evaluate the effectiveness of assessment as it relates to MLs. It will also explain the limitations of assessments as it relates to ML students and where we should go from there.

Validity is an important component of assessment. Validity is the extent to which an assessment measures what it is intended to measure (Duran, 2008). Without validity, there is no purpose of a test. Often, when ML students take standardized assessments,

they are testing for more skills than the intended area the test was supposed to measure. Abedi and Faltis (2015) explain that valid assessments of MLs knowledge, skills, and abilities focused on the degree at which the assessment measures the attribute a test was designed to measure. This connects to Duran (2008) which states that one limitation of large-scale assessment of MLs is it measures more than just the intended skill and knowledge area. Another limitation is that large-scale assessments only provide minimal information about what ML students know and can do (Duran, 2008). A third limitation described in Duran (2008) is that large-scale assessments do not take into account the current social and cultural nature of students, therefore, learning environments are too complex to be evaluated and these large-scale assessments are not authentic. Abedi and Faltis (2015) suggest that an additional limitation of validity which was not suggested in Duran (2008), is construct-irrelevant variance. This means a test item may be more difficult or easier based on the student's experience. For example, English proficiency (EP) can impact a student's answer to a question that is not measuring EP.

Duran (2008) suggests that there are four questions that need to be considered when assessing ML students. Those questions are: what is achievement? What activities give rise to achievement? What evidence is there of achievement in activities? What are the socioemotional consequences of the foregoing? (Duran, 2008). Similarly, Abedi and Faltis (2015) have five questions that should be considered when thinking about assessment validity for MLs. They are; do these assessments measure the knowledge and skills intended to measure? Does EP interfere with knowledge measurement when it is not supposed to measure EP? Are ELs' scores reliable? Do the scores provide useful information for how to improve instruction for ELs? Can you evaluate effective

instruction for ELs based on these assessment scores? (Abedi & Faltis, 2015, p. 219). In comparison, Abedi and Faltis (2015) essential questions focus on how a teacher would use the test scores in order to reflect upon their teaching, whereas Duran (2008) focused more on who created these tests and for what purpose. Abedi and Faltis (2015) addresses the validity issues when creating the test by suggesting understanding the diverse EL population, use universal test design (UTD), considering linguistic complexities in test items, and analyzing test items for any problems prior to administering them. Abedi and Faltis (2015) and Duran (2008) see similar issues in testing validity. However, Abedi and Faltis created a more indepth and expansive understanding on all accounts of validity in assessment of MLs.

Abedi and Faltis (2015) explain that when MLs are given test accommodations, it is important to evaluate the validity of those accommodations. Abedi and Faltis (2015) and Duran (2008) review how to improve assessments for ML students. Abedi and Faltis (2015) suggest that translation is a tricky accommodation because dialects and semantics may play a role in translation, therefore, bilingual glossaries may be the best form of valid translation. This supports Duran (2008) who identifies two forms of accommodations that show effectiveness and validity, one being bilingual glossaries. In addition, Duran (2008) suggests that providing MLs with English dictionaries and providing glossaries that expand on the meaning of terms when the test is not assessing language knowledge. However, Abedi and Faltis (2015) suggests that glossaries be made available to all students to lesson the accommodations for only MLs, and that using the UTD, glossaries can be a planned tool in assessment. Another common accommodation for MLs is linguistic simplification, however, Abedi and Faltis (2015) believe that

linguistic simplification should be part of the test creation process instead of an accommodation, so that the test is more straightforward in what it is asking the student to do.

Ardasheva et al. (2021) suggest that both the definition and picture match tasks are appropriate forms of assessment for ML students. Ardasheva et al. (2021) argues that the picture match tasks allows ML students to demonstrate their understanding of science vocabulary and allows for learning to be more accessible with visual support because it does not rely solely on language skills which are still developing. Abedi and Faltis (2015) may argue that this accommodation of both definition and picture match tasks should be made available to all students, not just MLs.

### **Oral Language Development**

According to research done on reading instruction for multilingual learners, there needs to be a focus on oral language development. To become a proficient reader, students have to not only decode texts but also comprehend texts (Helman & Burns, 2008). For ML students, this starts with oral language, sight word recognition, and vocabulary development. Oral language strategies are “strategies to engage children in conversations, using questioning and other tactics that can be used to evoke oral language use by the child” (van der Pluijijm et al., 2019, p. 326). Responsive communication is defined as strategies “used to emotionally support the child to talk with the parent, for example, by encouraging the child” (van der Pluijijm et al., 2019, pp. 326-327).

Helman and Burns (2008) focus on acquisition of sight words, words that students can retrieve automatically while reading texts. Helman and Burns (2008) discuss how these skills fit into reading development of ELs and the relationship between oral

language proficiency and acquisition of sight words. This article discusses their previous study in which they found a relationship between English proficiency and acquisition rates of English sight words for ML students. Students with lower oral English proficiency had the lowest rate of English sight word recognition and students with the highest rates of oral English language proficiency had the highest sight word acquisition rate (Helman & Burns, 2008).

Cruz de Quirós et al. (2012) share the results from a longitudinal study of an intervention called Story Retelling and Higher Order Thinking for English Language and Literacy Acquisition (STELLA) which focuses on combining integrated ESL strategies, higher order leveled questions, academic vocabulary in content area of science that was explicitly and implicitly taught, opportunities for retelling, and training teachers. Cruz de Quirós et al. (2012) describe STELLA as a way to organize structured literacy instruction to promote oral literacy and EL student literacy development. Their findings suggest that STELLA improved ML oral language production in vocabulary and listening comprehension because ML students scored higher in oral language skills in the STELLA group than in the control group (Cruz de Quirós et al., 2012). Cruz de Quirós et al. (2012) suggest that teachers should use structured story reading to increase vocabulary, comprehension and motivation.

Helman and Burns (2008) and Walqui and Heritage (2018) both provide suggestions for how teachers can support oral language development in ML students. Helman and Burns (2008) focus on sight word and vocabulary acquisition whereas Walqui and Heritage (2018) focus on promoting quality oral interactions with students. However, there were many similarities between the two lists of guidelines and

suggestions. Helman and Burns (2008) and Walqui and Heritage (2018) suggest differentiation based on where students are at developmentally. Teachers can do this by making shorter and more frequent lessons, being particular about the words chosen for word study, and introducing three new words in a word study portion of the lesson for students just learning English and five new words in word study for students with intermediate English skills (Helman & Burns, 2008). Walqui and Heritage (2018) emphasize scaffolds based on where the student is developmentally that promote participation and growth beyond what they can already do.

Another suggestion from Helman and Burns (2008) and Walqui and Heritage (2018) is to incorporate language development within skills instruction and integrate reading and writing into oral development activities. Students in the early stages of reading development work on phonemic awareness and letter-sound correspondences. The more oral language a student can produce, the more sounds they know. Therefore, Helman and Burns (2008) suggest that “using picture sorts of words that compare beginning or ending sounds supports vocabulary learning, phonemic awareness, and phonics” (p. 17). They also suggest that teachers use picture dictionaries of sight words. For transitional readers, it is important to not assume students know the meaning of a word even though they can read it. Walqui and Heritage (2018) suggest that oral interactions with text will build comprehension and language development. Helman and Burns (2008) take it a step further by suggesting that teachers should help students read with expression by focusing on meaning of the words and cues in the reading, discuss homophones and homographs, clarification of sounds, meanings, and complex single-syllable words. Helman and Burns (2008) also suggest that teachers should



encourage students to use new words in their own sentences. This connects to Walqui and Heritage (2018) idea that sentence frames are helpful when supporting student oral language interactions.

The last recommendation from Helman and Burns (2008) is to provide students with multiple opportunities to read high-utility words. Create personal readers for students that is a collection of memorized texts, poems, or dictated stories; provide time every day for students to read materials at their reading level; choose texts that have features that can scaffold MLs such as texts with lots of sight words, decodable words, relatable text and repetition; and allow for time to reread texts to work on fluency (Helman & Burns, 2008).

Specific teaching strategies to support written and oral word develop would be visual supports for new words through pictures, objects or actions; allow for opportunities for students to hear new words in context and ask questions about meaning; connect oral and written words; have students use words in their own sentences; encourage students to self monitor for understanding; and check for comprehension frequently (Helman & Burns, 2008). An article written by Walqui and Heritage (2018) expands upon the need for MLs to focus on oral language development and explains that in order for oral language development to happen, teachers need to create a classroom environment in which students feel comfortable to speak regardless of their English language proficiency. There are six skills that students need to focus on during oral interactions, from most important to least they are purpose, ideas, organization, sentences, words, and pronunciation (Walqui & Heritage, 2018). Teachers need to make sure students understand the purpose of their oral interactions. They should make sure

that students have ideas to elaborate on, therefore, teachers may need to support background knowledge. Additionally, they should provide support for organization of oral language such as sentence starters. They should consider the types of sentences students are producing and explain how sentences can be combined or expanded on by using more complex language. Educators need to pay attention to the words students use and can use this as an opportunity for vocabulary growth through synonyms. Lastly, teachers should point out pronunciation corrections only if it is deterring from meaning (Walqui & Heritage, 2018).

The purpose of the study done by Galante and Thomson (2017) was to assess drama instructional techniques and its impacts on ML student oral communication; more specifically oral fluency, comprehensibility, and accent. Galante and Thomson (2017) compared two groups, one with regular instruction and one with drama techniques instruction. The study found a significant impact on a student's L2 oral fluency using drama based instruction relative to other communicative learning practices done in the control group (Galante & Thomson, 2017). Reed and Lee (2020) also recommended dramatization as a way to develop oral language development. Galante and Thomson (2017) found there was an insignificant improvement in comprehensibility and no difference in student accent. In comparison, when thinking about Walqui and Heritage (2018) point that there is no need to correct student pronunciation unless it hinders understanding of content. Additionally, the finding that theater based instructional practices help students oral fluency, this may also help students relationships in the classroom because you are working together when practicing drama. This connects to

what Walqui and Heritage (2018) emphasize, which is to make sure classroom dynamics are positive so that all students feel comfortable to talk.

Reed and Lee (2020) explain that teachers and parents should know that oral language development helps early foundations of literacy and states teachers and parents should help students develop their oral language beginning as early as possible. They argue that what students are able to hear, read, speak and write depends on what they know about the relationships between expression and meaning. In a study done by van der Pluijijm et al. (2019), two research questions were addressed: what are effective activities and strategies that can be used to support parents with less education to promote their children's oral language development? And what are effective modes of delivery of these activities and strategies, according to studies? This study finds that talk and play activities for children aged three through eight years old are more effective for parents with less education, 63% of studies showed positive effects from the intervention (van der Pluijijm et al., 2019). 22% of interventions found positive effects of shared reading with parents with less education and their children (van der Pluijijm et al., 2019). This is substantially lower impact than talk and play activities. In addition, 10% of studies showed positive effects from read and write activities, which is not a significant amount (van der Pluijijm et al., 2019). Overall, the results of this study found that a combination of oral language and responsive communication strategies are effective, adaptive mode of delivery is important for their target group, and child involvement during parent training was an effective mode of delivery (van der Pluijijm et al., 2019). The combination of oral language and responsive communication strategies provides a way for adults to change the role in communication experiences so that both the child and parent are partners

instead of one having more control over the other (van der Pluijijm et al., 2019). This connects to Reed and Lee (2020) explaining adults should talk *with* children not *to* children.

A study done by van der Pluijijm et al. (2019) explains that print does not have to play a significant role in oral language development, instead storytelling, conversations and narratives with follow up questions with rich language. Reed and Lee (2020) expands this by giving other examples of ways to develop oral language through wordless books, toys, dramatization stories, pretend play, sensory play and technology. One recommendation for families to develop their child's oral language development is through conversations in flexible spaces that occur daily, such as eating dinner, going to school, and going grocery shopping (van der Pluijijm et al., 2019).

One key component of oral language development mentioned by Reed and Lee (2020) was read-alouds. Walqui and Heritage (2018) emphasize that teachers need to build a classroom environment where all students feel comfortable enough to speak. Reed and Lee (2020) explain when a child listens to a story read aloud, a bonding relationship forms between the listener and reader. Additionally, students learn to see reading as pleasurable, builds background knowledge, increases vocabulary, and promotes fluency. Read-alouds can be used as a tool to promote positive classroom communities, academic content, as well as oral language development.

### *Read-Alouds*

There are key components of literacy skills that can be taught using whole group read-alouds in the classroom. This section focuses on using read-alouds to teach students about concepts about print, text structure, develop their oral language, and gain

comprehension skills. This section will then describe what goes into creating a well rounded, beneficial read-aloud experience for students. A read-aloud is defined as “an instruction practice in which teachers or parents read texts aloud to children, incorporating pitch, tone, pace, volume changes, questions, and comments to produce a fluent and engaging delivery” (Johnston, 2016, p. 40). Reading aloud promotes comprehension, vocabulary, syntax and oral language development (as cited in Johnston, 2016, p. 40).

Reutzel (2015) suggests that in order for students to learn how to read, they need to understand concepts about print such as basic print concepts, words, letters, sentences, directionality, and book handling. They learn these concepts through shared reading experiences using pointing, circling, framing, counting, highlighting, verbal punctuations, and matching (Reutzel, 2015). Similarly, Johnston (2016) explains that when teachers are reading they should focus on the delivery of the story with emphasis on referencing different and important aspects of the book (Johnston, 2016). In addition to the importance of concepts about print, text structure is another piece of literacy that needs to be taught. Reutzel (2015) suggests instruction on story structure while listening to stories and applying this knowledge through oral language led to positive comprehension skills. Similarly, Reed and Lee (2020) explain the importance of communication patterns in speech will help with reading when students identify text patterns and structures in what they will read which promotes comprehension and fluency.

Interactive read-alouds are a systematic approach to read-alouds where teachers “models vocabulary development, reading fluency and comprehension strategies and requires the students to interact and become participants in their own learning” (as cited

in Johnston, 2016, p. 40). Johnston (2016) further explains what a systemic approach is through engagement, book selection, planning, and delivery. Engagement happens when teachers ask students open-ended questions and extend conversations through the read-aloud (Johnston, 2016). Teachers also are responsible for picking books that students can engage with, for example, good opportunities for predictions, retelling, summarizing, making connections, reading with expression, teaching specific vocabulary, inferring, and author's purpose (Johnston, 2016). Teachers plan for these read-alouds by providing students with pre-reading, during-reading and post-reading activities (Johnston, 2016). Additionally, the delivery of the read-aloud is important for fluency so teachers must vary voices, use meaningful gestures, and facial expressions (Johnston, 2016).

### **Summary**

In conclusion, this literature review discussed and synthesized who multilingual learners are in education, best literacy practices for teaching multilingual learners and arguably, all learners, validity of assessment and the importance of oral language development. The focus research question is *how are multilingual students' reading skills enhanced by pairing a science of reading phonics program with a focus on oral language development?* Overall, multilingual learners have been historically underserved in the education system and there is a need to create environments where they feel welcomed and are best served. Additionally, there is a need for making sure assessments are valid so that multilingual learners are properly assessed with validity taken into consideration so that teachers can adjust teaching techniques when needed and so that assessments allow MLs to show all that they know. Moreover, phonics-based instructional practices have been proven to be effective for multilingual learners. However, more needs to be done to

best support their language needs such as direct and explicit practice in oral language development. An effective tool for developing oral language in the classroom is read-alouds. For this reason, this project will pair a phonics-based curriculum with targeted oral language development through read-alouds.

Chapter Three will discuss the curriculum that will be developed that will incorporate read-alouds with oral language development to best support multilingual learner literacy development. The curriculum developed is intended to be paired with a phonics-based program because, as explained above, that is the best way to teach students how to read but read-alouds will add additional skills necessary to boost ML reading abilities. This upcoming chapter will also discuss who the intended audience is for this curriculum and the setting in which it is developed for.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Project Description

#### Introduction

This capstone project addresses the question, *how are multilingual students' reading skills enhanced by pairing a science of reading phonics program with a focus on oral language development?* It is important to address this question because multilingual learners have historically been underserved in education. To address this, best practices should be implemented to better support student academic achievement. The research suggests that best practices for multilingual learners also support the reading development of their English-only peers.

The literature review discusses four main sections: multilingual learners, reading instruction, multilingual learner assessment, and oral language development. All of these topics are key components to addressing the research question because it encompasses all the parts of successful literacy instruction. After analyzing and synthesizing the literature, there are three key takeaways that are addressed in this curriculum project. First, multilingual learners learn how to read using phonics-based, explicit and systematic instruction. Second, more instruction needs to be done for multilingual learners for comprehension and focus on vocabulary and oral language development have been key components to extend upon in literacy instruction. Third, read-alouds are a way for students to learn vocabulary, build oral language, and create a sense of community in the classroom. The following curriculum was created by combining all of these three key ideas, phonics-based instruction, oral language development, and read-alouds.

#### Project Description



This curriculum design focuses on oral language development and should be paired with a phonics-based instructional curriculum. The phonics-based curriculum that is recommended is the Groves Method, which focuses on systematic and explicit phonics instruction. From personal experience, the Groves Method has been successful in improving second graders decoding skills from a Title I school in a midwest city. The curriculum in this project is a series of read-aloud texts that teachers can use in a second grade classroom. This curriculum should not be used on its own because it does not use a systematic phonics based instructional approach to teaching reading, rather it should be paired with a science of reading, explicit phonics curriculum because phonics-based curricula often exclude emphasis on oral language development. Read-alouds are common practices in classrooms but in order for them to be used in the most effective and efficient way, they must be planned. This curriculum will allow teachers to use trusted read-alouds with an explicit focus on oral language development and it will be based on research, best practices, and Minnesota State academic standards. Oral language development is a key component of literacy instruction that can often be ignored in the classroom, especially during explicit phonics instruction time; which, based on the research, is the best way to teach students how to read. Therefore, creating a curriculum that can be paired with this and go beyond phonics instruction is key in supporting multilingual students reading development and proficiency.

The key research that supports this curriculum project are Dussling (2020), Silverman et al. (2020), and Hwang and Duke (2020) who suggest that phonics-based instruction supports the reading development of multilingual learners more than whole language instruction. However, Goldenberg (2020), Silverman et al. (2020) and Hwang

and Duke (2020) also suggest teachers need to focus on more than just decoding, especially for multilingual learners as it connects to comprehension. This is the reasoning behind focusing the curriculum on oral language development that should be paired with phonics-based instruction.

In addition, Kamps et al. (2007), Goldenberg (2020), Cruz de Quirós et al. (2012) and Walqui and Heritage (2018) emphasize the importance of developing oral language in young children to support reading proficiency. Furthermore, multiple studies support the use of read-alouds to develop oral language including Reed and Lee (2020), Johnston (2016) and Reutzel (2015). Reutzel (2015) suggests text structure is important to teach students because it supports comprehension. Therefore, combining read-alouds with targeted oral language development while learning about text-structure, is the basis of this curriculum and is justified by the researchers listed above.

This curriculum is a series of 25 read-alouds, separated based off of text structure. The UbD framework contains the standards that will be addressed in the lessons. The single lesson plans contain the learning target, the title of the read-aloud, key vocabulary words that need to be addressed prior to and during reading, sentence stems for responses and a teacher script including the questions that should be asked and when. The standards relate to text-structure and listening, speaking, viewing, and exchanging ideas. Understanding text structure supports comprehension of text and is the basis for learning how to write in a specific structure.

The curriculum project starts off with an overview of all the lessons using the UbD Framework. It lists the standards and desired results. Since this curriculum's main goal is for students' oral language to develop, the curriculum will be assessed based on

the oral language assessment. The curriculum also emphasizes text structure because, given what research has said, understanding text structure is a key literary skill that supports comprehension. There is not a summative assessment for a student's understanding of text-structure because given the allotted time, there is only one area of focus for summative assessment. It is stated in the key notes of the curriculum that prior text structure lessons have been taught. This would be the place that summative assessment for text structure should occur. This will be talked about further in implications and limitations.

The evidence the teacher collects consists of informal observations of student discussions and written exit slips after lessons that are supported using sentence frames. The summative assessment is given as a pre-assessment, the teacher then records data in the oral language data sheet and gives the same assessment at the end of the curriculum. After putting in the new data in the oral language data sheet, the teacher is able to evaluate if students move up in their oral language proficiency.

Next, the project lists the read-aloud list categorized based on the text structure the book is written in. This list is so the teacher knows which books to collect and to keep the curriculum organized. After the read-aloud list are the Google slides containing sentence frames. Sentence frames are a key scaffold when focusing on oral language development so students can practice academic conversations and complete sentences. These can be printed and posted around the discussion area or posted on the board. Some read-alouds have specific sentence frames and starters which are also in the Google slides.

After the sentence frames, there are two lessons that should be done prior to the read-alouds. They are lessons that promote active listening and turn and talk routines. These procedures are found in the read-aloud lessons and the lessons can be redone as needed. The best way to support student discussion is to provide expectations and routines. These lessons help the teacher prepare for these expectations and routines.

Subsequently, there is a list of key notes to the teacher. The most important pieces of the key notes are that students should already have lessons on nonfiction vs. fiction text, but if they still need work you can add that question to any introduction. Another important piece is that explicit text structure lessons have already been given so these build off of the explicit lessons. The third most important piece is the table from *Shifting the Balance* by Burkins and Yates (2021) found on pages 25-26. This table is necessary for teachers to have as background knowledge to be better facilitators of discussion and know what to look for or how to support oral language development.

Next is the start of the read-aloud lesson plans. They are broken apart based on text-structure. It starts with compare and contrast, cause and effect, chronological, descriptive, then problem and solution. There are five lessons in each text structure category, with a total of 25 lessons. Each lesson contains a learning target, introduction, before, during and after reading activities, and ends with an assessment. The words written in italics are the script for teachers. Following that is the oral-language assessment and the data sheet for pre and post assessment data collection.

The Minnesota state literacy standards that are addressed in this curriculum are (Minnesota Department of Education, 2023):

- R1 Foundations of Reading: Demonstrate knowledge of oral language, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and morphology to read accurately and fluently.
- R4 Foundations of Reading: Read critically to comprehend, interpret, and analyze themes and central ideas in complex literary and informational texts
- R5 Foundations of Reading: Apply knowledge of text structure to understand and evaluate a wide variety of complex literary and informational texts.
- Listening, Speaking, Viewing, and Exchanging Ideas 1: Exchange ideas in discussion and collaboration, as listener, speaker, and participant, A) including the voices and perspectives of Dakota and Anishinaabe people as well other perspectives, identities, and cultures like and unlike their own, and B) expressing one's own ideas, stories, and experiences.
- Listening, Speaking, Viewing, and Exchanging Ideas 2: Communicate with others, applying knowledge of vocabulary, language, structure, and features of spoken language, considering audience and context.

### ***Setting/Audience***

This curriculum is intended for students in a second grade classroom, in an urban setting in the midwest with a class size of 15-25 students. The school serves about 280, pre-k to fifth grade students. This project is for students in a Title I school with a focus on students who are multilingual learners. The staff in this school are predominately white with teaching experience ranging from first year to 30th year. This curriculum will be

implemented during the student's literacy block and teachers should allot about 15-20 minutes per lesson. There are multiple text structures that should be addressed in second grade including problem and solution, cause and effect, compare and contrast, description and chronological.

### ***Assessment***

Teachers will measure growth by first giving an oral-language pre-assessment. Then, they will monitor student growth through observations during the 15-20 minute lessons. Students will demonstrate growth of oral language development through doing the same oral language assessment that they took at the beginning of the unit, at the end. The oral language development assessment is attached below in Appendix A.

### **Summary**

This curriculum project focuses on oral language development of multilingual second graders. The curriculum goals include understanding text structures to help students further comprehend texts while the major focus is on oral language development to support literacy proficiency. Chapter Three discusses the research that most supports this curriculum development, standards the curriculum will address, intended audience, setting, how students will be assessed, and a timeline of project development. Chapter Four will give a summary of the research question, *how are multilingual students' reading skills enhanced by pairing a science of reading phonics program with a focus on oral language development?* Chapter Four will have a personal and professional reflection on the capstone project and curriculum development. Chapter Four will also give a project description and provide the implications and limitations. The final chapter

will also give possible extensions and next steps that could be done related to this curriculum.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Conclusion

#### Introduction

This capstone project addresses the importance of pairing a science of reading curriculum with targeted oral language development and its impacts on multilingual students' reading abilities. The purpose of this project is to determine best practices for teaching multilingual learners how to read. The research question I focused on is *how are multilingual students' reading skills enhanced by pairing a science of reading phonics program with a focus on oral language development?*

I have learned that making a well rounded, meaningful curriculum takes time, effort, and patience. Time needs to be spent analyzing research, noting the similarities and differences amongst the researchers to inform your next steps. Effort involves taking moments to really think about topics and how it relates to your work. And patience is involved when you work through something, edit it and rework and maybe even begin a whole new idea. I have learned not everything will work out the first time but that is okay, it will work out in the end and bring out the best ideas.

Professionally, I learned how to make informal time in the classroom meaningful through conversation. As a teacher, I often get stressed about whether or not I am using the time with students in the best way possible. Through learning about the importance of oral language development, I have learned that these moments that seem informal, are one of the most important ways to develop student's oral language, which impacts their literacy development. It has taught me to preplan read-alouds in order to make it meaningful. I have also learned about great read-alouds by spending time looking



through diverse book finders, reading them online, and visiting the library. I hope to not only use the books I ended up picking for this curriculum project but the books that I stumbled upon on the way.

Lastly, I learned there are many different perspectives out there in the education world, whether that be in the research or shown through picture books. It reminded me of the importance of diversity and inclusion when it comes to teaching and learning. The research was endless when it came to best practices for teaching reading to multilingual learners. Each study I read had its own unique way of research or conclusions, yet there was overlap as well. It taught me to notice these similarities and differences and not necessarily label something as good or bad, but to take it as it is and dive deeper into the research. In children's books, I notice not only the diversity in stories being told but also about those writing and illustrating the stories.

Chapter four will highlight key research found in the literature review that influenced the curriculum project development. It will then describe the project, discuss implications and limitations of the project, and finally consider next steps of the curriculum development.

### **Literature Review Highlights**

The literature review discusses four main sections: multilingual learners, reading instruction, multilingual learner assessment, and oral language development. All of these topics are key components to addressing the research question because it encompasses all the parts of successful literacy instruction. After analyzing and synthesizing the literature, there are three key takeaways that will be addressed in this curriculum development. First, multilingual learners learn how to read using phonics-based, explicit and systematic

instruction. Second, more instruction needs to be done for multilingual learners for comprehension and focusing on vocabulary and oral language development have been key components to extend upon in literacy instruction. Third, read-alouds are a way for students to learn vocabulary, build oral language, and create a sense of community in the classroom. The following curriculum that will be described was created by combining all of these three key ideas, phonics-based instruction, oral language development, and read-alouds.

The key research that supports this curriculum project are Dussling (2020), Silverman et al. (2020), and Hwang and Duke (2020) who suggest that phonics-based instruction supports the reading development of multilingual learners more than whole language instruction. However, Goldenberg (2020), Silverman et al. (2020) and Hwang and Duke (2020) also suggest teachers need to focus on more than just decoding, especially for multilingual learners as it connects to comprehension. This is the reasoning behind focusing the curriculum on oral language development that should be paired with phonics-based instruction.

In addition, Kamps et al. (2007), Goldenberg (2020), Cruz de Quirós et al. (2012) and Walqui and Heritage (2018) emphasize the importance of developing oral language in young children to support reading proficiency. Furthermore, multiple studies support the use of read-alouds to develop oral language including Reed and Lee (2020), Johnston (2016) and Reutzel (2015). Reutzel (2015) suggests text structure is important to teach students because it supports comprehension. Therefore, combining read-alouds with targeted oral language development while learning about text-structure, is the basis of this curriculum and is justified by the researchers listed above.

## **Implications and Limitations**

This capstone project has many implications for teaching and learning. One implication is that teachers should use up to date research on best practices for teaching multilingual students. Students need a well rounded educational experience with multiple learning opportunities, especially if they are multilingual students. This means incorporating vocabulary learning into every lesson in your classroom. It also means giving students the opportunity to learn from read-alouds and from phonics based, science of reading approaches. As a teacher, it is understandable to be stressed out about time and making sure every lesson is reached. That is why this curriculum is helpful, because it is 15-20 minute lessons that focus on what might be missing in the science of reading curriculum.

Another implication is diversity and equity is represented in these read-alouds. There are stories about all kinds of people in this curriculum. There is a book written in multiple languages and there are multiple books that contain words from more than English. There are nonfiction and fiction books. Books about inventors of various races and diverse people standing up against injustices. Countries represented other than the United States include India and Malawi. Immigration is another common theme in some of the books. Lastly, neurodiversity is also represented in one of the books. Not only are the story characters diverse but the authors are as well. This curriculum encompasses many different identities that students can connect with, learn about and learn from.

A benefit to the profession that this curriculum project presents is a way for teachers to provide students with a well rounded literacy education. Teachers are able to use this beneficial curriculum in their classrooms even if there is only 15-20 minutes of

time allotted. Teachers are busy trying to give mandated curriculums that may overlook the importance of read-alouds and oral language development. This is a trusted and relevant set of books to read to students. Another benefit is it takes research and puts it into practice. Many times, teachers are told what the best practices are and relevant research, but they are not given concrete tools and resources that can be used in the classroom. This curriculum provides that for teachers.

One limitation of this curriculum development is there is not an explicit text structure lesson given, therefore, teachers need to find or create their own. The explicit text structure lesson will help students with comprehension of texts. This curriculum just builds upon the explicit lesson. Another limitation is there are some identities that your students may have that are not represented in this curriculum. For example, gender expression and non-binary families and characters are not represented. That is a topic that would be focused on in next steps. In addition, a limitation is although this curriculum is based on research, it has not yet been implemented, therefore, it cannot be said that there are proven results of student's oral language development increased because of this curriculum. This leads to discussing what the next steps for this curriculum project are.

### **Next Steps**

The next steps for this project include evaluating if it helped students improve their oral language and move them up on the oral language development scale. Another next step would be to add to the read-alouds and expand the curriculum. This one focuses on different text structures, but you can add oral language development into any read-aloud and use read-aloud to teach many different things. For example, if there is a unit you really want to do surrounding animals, weather, history, inventors, then finding

read-alouds that teach those topics and following the lesson plan format of this capstone project. The key is to focus on oral language while also learning about other topics.

Another extension of this curriculum can be done by adding read-alouds that address social emotional development or other standards in the second grade classroom. It mentions above gender expression and non-binary families and characters are not represented, therefore that would be another form of diversity that can be added into this read-aloud curriculum. The lesson structure was created with the thought that more read-alouds would be added in the future; therefore, the structure can be used again and again for educators. Once an educator gets the gist of these read-alouds and the questions that elicit oral language development, the easier it will be to provide students with a purposeful and rich read-aloud experience. I hope this curriculum helps busy teachers support student literacy through interactive read-alouds and meaningful classroom discourse.

## **Conclusion**

Multilingual learners are a growing population in our schools and research shows teaching strategies that support MLs also support monolingual students. Therefore, the teaching strategies outlined in the literature review support all students. Evidence shows the science of reading methodology teaches young learners how to read, but there needs to be more emphasis placed on vocabulary learning and oral language development. Through structured and planned read-alouds that focus on oral language development, students will get the necessary knowledge to build literacy skills and overall reading proficiency. That is why pairing a science of reading curriculum and a read-aloud curriculum that focuses on oral language development like the one created in this

capstone project, will support student academic success, leading to a more equitable learning environment for all students.

## Appendix A

Student pre- and post-assessment for oral language development (Nowak, 2023).

Student: _____		Date: _____	
<h1 style="margin: 0;">Oral Language Assessment</h1> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Listening &amp; Repeating</h2>			
Level 1	The girl's hair is curly.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	He's eating his banana slowly.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Here are the papers.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Mommy is baking a cake.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	The teacher read them a story.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Subtotal: $\frac{\quad}{5}$		Notes:	
Level 2	On the weekend Sam brought us some cookies.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	This purple ball is from the big store.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	The giraffe in the zoo is eating his leaves.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	The dog went to sleep beside the house.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	She flies her red kite high up in the sky.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Subtotal: $\frac{\quad}{5}$		Notes:	
Level 3	There goes the lady who bakes the bread at our store.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Take out your pencil when the school bell rings.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	My sister likes to drink orange juice early in the morning.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Here comes the truck that was carrying some big rocks.		<input type="checkbox"/>
	At the end of the day, the tall man got in his car and went to the park.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Subtotal: $\frac{\quad}{5}$		Notes:	
		TOTAL: $\frac{\quad}{15}$	

## REFERENCES

- Abedi, J., & Faltis, C. (2015). Teacher assessment and the assessment of students with diverse learning needs. *Review of Research in Education, 39*(1), vii-xiv.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X14558995>
- Ardasheva, Y., Crosson, A. C., Carbonneau, K. J., & French, B. F. (2021). Unpacking contributions of morphosyntactic awareness and vocabulary to science reading comprehension among linguistically diverse students. *TESOL Quarterly, 55*(3), 931-965. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3039>
- Brooks, K., Adams, S. R., & Morita-Mullaney, T. (2010). Creating inclusive learning communities for ELL students: Transforming school principals' perspectives. *Theory into Practice, 49*(2), 145-151.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841003641501>
- Case, A. F. (2015). Beyond the language barrier: Opening spaces for ELL/non-ELL interaction. *Research in the Teaching of English, 49*(4), 361-382.
- Cruz de Quirós, A. M., Lara-Alecio, R., Tong, F., & Irby, B. J. (2012). The effect of a structured story reading intervention, story retelling and higher order thinking for english language and literacy acquisition. *Journal of Research in Reading, 35*(1), 87-113. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9817.2010.01472.x>
- Duran, R. P. (2008). Assessing english-language learners' achievement. *Review of Research in Education, 32*(1), 292-327.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X07309372>
- Dussling, T. M. (2020). The impact of an early reading intervention with english



- language learners and native-english-speaking children. *Reading Psychology*, 41(4), 241-263. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2020.1768977>
- Escamilla, K., Hopewell, S., & Slavick, J. (2021). Teaching (bi)multilingual learners: Connecting languages. *The Reading Teacher*, 75(3), 363-371. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.2044>
- Galante, A., & Thomson, R. I. (2017). The effectiveness of drama as an instructional approach for the development of second language oral fluency, comprehensibility, and accentedness. *TESOL Quarterly: A Journal for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages and of Standard English as a Second Dialect*, 51(1), 115-142. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/tesq.290>
- Goldenberg, C. (2020). Reading wars, reading science, and english learners. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 55, S131-S144. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.340>
- Groves Learning Organization. (2023, March 29). *About Groves Learning Organization*. Groves. <https://www.groveslearning.org/about-us/>
- Helman, L. A., & Burns, M. K. (2008). What does oral language have to do with it? helping young english-language learners acquire a sight word vocabulary. *The Reading Teacher*, 62(1), 14-19. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.62.1.2>
- Hwang, H., & Duke, N. K. (2020). Content counts and motivation matters: Reading comprehension in third-grade students who are english learners. *AERA Open*, 6(1)
- Johnston, V. (2016). Successful read-alouds in today's classroom. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 52(1), 39-42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00228958.2016.1123051>
- Kamps, D., Abbott, M., Greenwood, C., Arreaga-Mayer, C., Wills, H., Longstaff, J., Culpepper, M., & Walton, C. (2007). Use of evidence-based, small-group reading

instruction for english language learners in elementary grades: Secondary-tier intervention. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 30(3), 153-168.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/30035561>

Minnesota Department of Education. (n.d.). *Academic Standards (K-12)*.

<https://education.mn.gov/mde/fam/stds/>

Niehaus, K., & Adelson, J. L. (2014). School support, parental involvement, and academic and social-emotional outcomes for english language learners. *American Educational Research Journal*, 51(4), 810-844.

<https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831214531323>

Nowak, Sam. (2023, April 16). The Ultimate Early Years Assessment Pack: language, math, basic skills & MORE! [Online forum post]. Pinterest.

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/100908847877364224/>

Reed, J., & Lee, E. (2020) *The importance of oral language development in young literacy learners: Children need to be seen and heard* (2020). Southern Association on Children Under Six.

Robinson, J. M. (2018). Evaluation of teaching methods to improve reading performance of english language learners. *Journal for the Advancement of Educational Research International*, 12(1), 25-33.

Roy-Campbell, Z. (2013). Who educates teacher educators about english language learners? *Reading Horizons*, 52(3), 255-280.

Reutzell, D. R. (2015). Early literacy research. *The Reading Teacher*, 69(1), 14-24.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1387>

Silverman, R. D., Johnson, E., Keane, K., & Khanna, S. (2020). Beyond decoding: A

meta-analysis of the effects of language comprehension interventions on K-5 students' language and literacy outcomes. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 55

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/rrq.346>

U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) *Our Nations English Learners*

<https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/el-characteristics/index.html#intro> (r.d. March 12, 2023)

U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) *Academic Performance and Outcomes for English*

*Learners* <https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/el-outcomes/index.html#one> (r.d. March 12, 2023)

van der Pluijijm, M., van Gelderen, A., & Kessels, J. (2019). Activities and strategies for parents with less education to promote the oral language development of their children: A review of empirical interventions. *School Community Journal*, 29(1), 317-362.

Walqui, A., & Heritage, M. (2018). Meaningful classroom talk: Supporting english learners' oral language development. *American Educator; American Educator*, 42(3), 18.

Zugel, K. (2020). The effectiveness of a combined word study and reading curriculum with EL and NonEL students. *Reading Improvement*, 57(2), 58-70.