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How Does Daily Exposure To Vocabulary Through Text Talk Carry Over Into The Speaking And Writing of First Grade Students?

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HOW DOES DAILY EXPOSURE TO VOCABULARY THROUGH TEXT TALK CARRY OVER INTO THE SPEAKING AND WRITING OF FIRST GRADE STUDENTS

By

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Education.

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter One</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My language experience</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full circle</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The wonder of words</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The gap</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The importance of language</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words are power</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter summary</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Two</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student’s vocabulary knowledge</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life experiences</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomics</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family dynamics</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s education</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to books</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary instruction</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four types of vocabulary</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Read-alouds..................................................................................24
Word-rich classroom.........................................................................25
Explicit instruction........................................................................27
Modeling......................................................................................28
Vocabulary assessment.................................................................30
Depth...........................................................................................31
Breadth........................................................................................31
Receptive/productive vocabulary.......................................................31
Student’s vocabulary in speaking......................................................32
Student’s vocabulary in reading and writing.................................33
Summary of chapter two.................................................................34
Introduction to chapter three........................................................35
Chapter Three................................................................................36
Methods........................................................................................36
Rationale......................................................................................37
Model...........................................................................................38
Text Talk.....................................................................................38
What will it look like on a daily basis?..........................................40
Setting........................................................................................42
District demographics.................................................................42
Participants...............................................................................42
School background....................................................................43
Human subject review.................................................................43

Method..........................................................................................43

Qualitative data...............................................................................44

  Parent survey..............................................................................44

  Observations..............................................................................44

  Checklist/tally tickets..............................................................44

  Teacher journal.......................................................................45

Quantitative data..........................................................................45

  Curriculum based assessments..............................................45

  Standardized tests.................................................................45

  Archival documents...............................................................45

Summary of chapter three..........................................................46

Introduction to chapter four.......................................................46

Chapter Four.................................................................................47

Results of data collection..........................................................47

Qualitative data..........................................................................47

  Parent survey............................................................................47

  Observations............................................................................49

  Checklists/tally tickets...........................................................50

  Teacher journal.....................................................................51

Quantitative data.......................................................................52

  Curriculum based assessment..............................................52
Appendix A...........................................................................................78
Appendix B...........................................................................................79
Appendix C...........................................................................................80
Appendix D...........................................................................................81
Appendix E...........................................................................................84
Appendix F...........................................................................................85
Appendix G...........................................................................................86
Appendix H...........................................................................................87

LIST OF TABLES
Table 1- Weekly Text Talk lessons.........................................................40
Table 2- Vocabulary throughout the day.................................................41

LIST OF FIGURES
Figure 1- Percentage of vocabulary word usage on tally tickets...........50
Figure 2- Text Talk assessment...............................................................52
Figure 3- PPVT-R percentiles.................................................................53
Figure 4- NWEA MAPs 2015-2016 vocabulary strand.......................54
Figure 5- NWEA MAPs vocabulary strand kindergarten through second grade.56
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Language and the power of words is something we continue to learn throughout our lives. Some people have a natural ability to eloquently choose words that engage us as readers and listeners, but most of us need to continually practice this skill in our speaking and writing. Knowledge of word power is something all students should have the opportunity to learn, practice, and express in their speaking and writing. I want to know how does daily exposure to vocabulary through Text Talk carry over into the speaking and writing of first grade students? Through this chapter I will give you a little insight into my own language development, my teaching journey, as well as a glimpse into my passion for language, and where I see my journey continuing through this project to get an even better understanding of vocabulary and the power of words.

My language experience

Our childhood experiences and background knowledge set the stage for our own abilities, and sometimes limitations as learners of language. As a child I spent part of my first grade year in speech because people could not understand me. I remember being asked to repeat things, but always thought I had just said it too quietly and needed to be louder. It was not until specific sounds were pointed out to me and I practiced correcting them that I realized it was not my volume, it was how I was saying things that made me hard to understand. Through speech it was eventually figured out that although I had some common speech corrections that needed to be practiced like w for r and sh for ch,
my main problem was that I just had a very thick Norwegian brogue. As a child I was fortunate to spend a great deal of time (almost every weekend) with our extended family in the rural community where my parents grew up. I spent a lot of time with my great grandparents, all of whom had come from Norway as children or young adults and spoke with very thick Norwegian brogues. Somehow this carried over into my own language, to the point I did not hear, or know I was saying things different. My parents were *Yim* and *YoAnn* and I liked *jellybeans*. Although I was not always understood, I had been exposed to many things and my vocabulary was high, people just could not tell. Looking back on it, my story is a bit humorous, but had I not been able to overcome my speech and language issues I would probably not be the person hired to teach children phonemic awareness, and it could have possibly changed my career path all together. Any language disadvantage is hard; not being able to express yourself or be understood is an awful feeling. Although my own language issue was not with vocabulary and word meanings, I am seeing this becoming a big concern in my teaching experience. Students coming in with limited vocabulary and word understanding not only have the challenge of expressing themselves but also making sense of the world around them and this can not only set the tone for their educational experience, but possibly their future career.

**Full circle**

I have had the privilege of a very diverse teaching career that in the end has come full circle. My first teaching position was as a third grade teacher in Northern Minnesota where I taught for one year. This is now my fourth year as the first grade teacher back at this same school. The diverseness comes from my experiences in between completing
this circle. Teaching math and science at an alternative inner city middle school for three years. Fourth grade and gifted/talented in a rural farming community for two years. And then back to the same Northern Minnesota District that I started in, but teaching Kindergarten through second grade at the small outlying school. After five years, the school became a charter school and I took a leave of absence from the district to stay on with the charter school. I taught at the charter school for seven more years. It is here I learned more of the politics of education by serving on the school board and various other committees. Four years ago I was hired back by the original district where I have now received my second tenure. These experiences have given me insights, skills, and inspirations that have made me the teacher I am today. Though I have taught in many grades through my career, and have enjoyed them all, I feel my passion is in the early years of education and I have been blessed that most of my years have been in the lower elementary.

The wonder of words

I love teaching students the wonder of words. The excitement and glowing that comes from a child as they begin to figure out the power of words is something I have had the opportunity to witness hundreds of times, and hope to witness hundreds upon hundreds of more times. I have always found words to be a mighty and wonderful gift. Finding fun ways to play with words and word meanings is something I remember doing as a child and still find enjoyment in today. I bring my love of language into my classroom in hopes that my students will also find a love for words in their own worlds.
The gap

In recent years I have become even more passionate about language and vocabulary as I am beginning to see a gap between students with high exposure to rich language and vocabulary and those that have not experienced rich language widen in my class each year. Hart and Risley (2003) found that students coming from professional homes enter Kindergarten with exposure to about 30 million more words than children from economically disadvantaged homes. This gap has never been as evident as it has this year when my district adopted the Words Their Way spelling program. This program starts with pictures that the students sort into groups by beginning sounds, digraphs, and blends and then moves into spelling patterns. Each week as we look at the pictures to sort, I am overwhelmed at some of the pictures students cannot identify. Pictures of things such as a “track” or “grill” are things some of my students could not identify because they have never been exposed to these things, and therefore had no understanding of what they were. Although we live in a rural somewhat isolated section of the state, and do not have any railroad tracks per say, I found it baffling that they did not know this. I start out each year reading *The Little Engine That Could*, and spend a lot of time focusing on the “I think I can” attitude needed in first grade, and life for that matter. However later on when it came to identifying a track, they did not know what it was. The background knowledge we bring into a situation gives us either an edge up or an automatic game of catch up. Though the lesson was to see if students could identify the beginning sounds in the pictures, some of my students had to identify and understand the picture first, therefore making me question if it was the skill of matching beginning
sounds or the background knowledge of my students that was being tested. I am interested to see what I can do in my classroom to close this gap. By focusing on exposing students to daily vocabulary, I am hoping to see more interesting and powerful words in their speaking and writing.

The importance of language

Language is an essential key to learning (Kamil et al., 2008; National Institute for Literacy, 2001). It is needed for communicating and building relationships with others, as well as enabling children to make sense of the world around them. With the importance of language and vocabulary in mind, I would like to see if daily exposure in a vocabulary-rich environment while providing instruction in words and word-learning strategies my students would develop greater vocabulary knowledge, therefore enabling them to be better communicators both verbally and in their writing. By exposing students to a rich vocabulary during our read-aloud time, giving direct instruction and introducing formal versus casual language I have an opportunity to impact language in my classroom on a daily basis. Marrow and Gambrell (2011) stated that “there is a positive correlation between how often children listen to read alouds and the size of their vocabulary” (p. 76) and that “vocabulary is a significant factor in literacy success” (p. 77). I do believe that vocabulary is a significant factor in literacy success, and by exposing my students to words that bring meaning to daily life, as well as connections between texts, I am giving my students the opportunity to speak, write and communicate at a higher level in society. By doing this research project in my own class, I will be able to see the outcomes first hand of how adding daily vocabulary impacts my students writing and speaking.
Words are power

Giving students the power of words through exposure, direct instruction and word play gives them the chance to make the words their own in their writing and speaking. Vocabulary knowledge however is key to the success in all subjects in school as each has vocabulary that is needed for understanding, therefore it is a much bigger issue than just writing and speaking (Kamil et al., 2008). Giving students new words and meanings to pull from and increasing their knowledge base will help them not only in all areas of learning at school (National Institute for Literacy, 2001), but also as they look to their future plans beyond school. I believe that someone that can clearly write or speak their ideas has more confidence and is better able to present themselves to others. Words are knowledge and knowledge is power.

Summary

The gap in vocabulary in my first grade students is a concern I feel needs to be addressed. I will do this by asking *How does daily exposure to vocabulary through Text Talk carry over into the speaking and writing of first grade students?* This research project will give me the opportunity to dive deeper into the world of words through reviewing literature and research on vocabulary and language development. Through the process I also intend to tap into the knowledge of my highly qualified colleagues and share what I am finding with them. My hope is that through my findings, I can even the playing field for those students coming in with fewer words in their vocabulary, while showing all students the power of words and how word choice can make things more exciting and engaging. In the next chapter I focus on three subtopics; student’s vocabulary knowledge, vocabulary
instruction, and vocabulary assessment in the classroom. In each of these subtopics I will look more closely at the literature and research I have reviewed to support and challenge my question. *How does daily exposure to vocabulary through Text Talk carry over into the speaking and writing of first grade students?*
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hart and Risley (2003) found that students coming from professional homes enter Kindergarten with exposure to about 30 million more words than children from economically disadvantaged homes. This statistic, along with my own experiences of language gaps in my first grade class, led me to look more into ways I can close this language gap and build a stronger foundation for my students.

In this chapter, I will review the research to provide insight and a foundation into the question *How does daily exposure to vocabulary through Text Talk carry over into the speaking and writing of first grade students?* I will do this in three sections. The first section looks at student vocabulary knowledge, the second section focuses on vocabulary instruction, and the third section looks at assessing vocabulary in the classroom.

**Student’s Vocabulary Knowledge**

Many factors may contribute to a child’s vocabulary and language knowledge. Some of these factors can include; life experience, socioeconomics, family dynamics (birth order, who child lives with), parent’s education, gender, and exposure to books (Brabham et al., 2012; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; De Temple & Snow, 2003; Dollaghan, 1999; Hart & Risley, 1995, 2003; Hoff-Ginsberg, 1998; Hyde & Linn, 1988; Moats, 2001; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011; Payne, 2013; Sax, 2006; Walker et al., 1994). Each one of these sub-categories will be researched further to see how/if each affects a child’s vocabulary and language development, while also looking for common threads in
the research for other indicators as to why the gap in vocabulary seems to be getting bigger.

**Life experience.** Children need several repeated exposures to a word before it is learned, therefore children learn their first words from speakers in the environment they are raised (Hart & Risley, 1995). The importance of real life experiences where children can associate words in many contexts is becoming more and more evident as the gap continues to grow in students entering school (Brabham et al., 2012; Hart & Risley, 2003). Children need to have multiple exposures in multiple situations in order to own and understand a word or concept. However, due to financial hardships, many families find that extra experiences such as trips to the zoo, museums, restaurants, or vacations are not always possible. Outside everyday life opportunities are beneficial but, they are not always necessary. De Temple and Snow (2003) stated that if the child’s environment supports word learning and gives them the opportunity to engage in conversations with adults, therefore having the chance to use words they are in the process of acquiring meaning for; it is just as beneficial to early language development and vocabulary as exposure to extra outside experiences.

The gap in word knowledge and vocabulary carries over into all aspects of a child’s education. Needing to know and understand words is necessary for learning in every subject. Vocabulary plays a particularly important role in learning to read (National Institute for Literacy, 2001). As beginning readers, children use the words they have heard to make sense of the words they see in print and therefore have a much more difficult time reading words that are not already part of their oral vocabulary. When
children read printed words they are already in their oral vocabulary, they can more easily and quickly map sounds to letters, read words fluently, and comprehend what they are reading. If these words are not in children’s oral vocabulary, they will have difficulty reading the words and thus their comprehension is hindered (National Reading Panel, 2000). Interaction and exposure to language is an important factor impacting vocabulary, and the solid language foundation students need to start school.

**Socioeconomics.** There is evidence that a child’s environment, regardless of their socioeconomics, can support language development and provide opportunities to engage in conversations that develop understanding of words. However, it is often very difficult for families in economically disadvantaged situations to create such an atmosphere (De Temple & Snow, 2003). Parents that are working multiple jobs to make ends meet are not always available to engage in conversations outside of just what is needed to make it through the day, limiting the opportunities for extended word learning and meaning making interactions between the parent and child (Payne, 2013). As stated in the introduction, Hart and Risley (2003) found that students coming from professional homes enter Kindergarten with exposure to about 30 million more words than children from economically disadvantaged homes. Based on these statistics, Hart and Risley have studied the effects of early language and school outcomes. They found that early language exposure had a positive correlation with verbal ability, receptive/spoken language, and academic achievement. Not only is language exposure important, but the kind of language the child is exposed to is also an important factor in a child’s understanding of language and vocabulary. Payne (2013) stated that the knowledge of
formal register language, or the acquired skill that constitutes vocabulary and sentence structure necessary for navigating school and work, is often a resource those in poverty do not have available and therefore come into school having to not only learn the meanings of words, but also the nuances for speaking and writing in the formal register. Students need to learn how to communicate in the formal register so others can understand and learn from what they are saying and writing. A child’s socioeconomic status is one of the most significant factors influencing vocabulary gaps (Hart & Risley, 1995) and something all schools should be addressing.

Family dynamics. Research on the relationship between birth order and children's early language development has tended to be conducted within two rather different frameworks, the first predicting birth-order differences in the onset and rate of early language development and the second birth-order differences in its style and content (Pine, 1995). The results of these studies have so far proved rather inconclusive. Jones and Adamson (1987) found a significant difference between first- and later-born children on a maternal-report measure of vocabulary size. Whereas Oshima-Takane and Derevensky (1990) found no differences between first and later-borns on an observational measure of vocabulary size, but a significant advantage for second-borns in the acquisition of personal pronouns. According to Lowry (2011, 2012) at the Hanen Centre, researchers have found some interesting differences in first-born and later-born children’s vocabulary and language skills. First-born children often reach the 50-word milestone earlier than their later-born siblings, however, the later-born children catch up quickly, and there is no lasting difference in vocabulary between the children. Later-born
children are more advanced in their use of pronouns and conversational skills than their first-born siblings while first-born children were more advanced in vocabulary and grammar (Hoff-Ginsberg, 1998). Jenkins stated to Reuters Health (as cited in Seaman, 2014) that previous research has found that children from large families tend to score lower on vocabulary, IQ, and other academic tests compared to children in smaller families, referring to this phenomenon as “resource dilution” or the fact that the parents’ attention has to be split between the children, therefore the larger the family, the less attention each individual child receives. The inconclusive findings on whether birth order plays into vocabulary and language development are interesting and demonstrate that there is room for further studies in this area. I will record the birth order of the participants, but mainly for my own curiosity to see if there is a trend within the students in my class. However, I do not anticipate that this will be a large indicator of proving or disproving my research question.

Parent’s education. Several studies in the United States show a relationship between parental education and their communication with their children. The quality of communication between parent and children may be due to factors such as the parents language and literacy skills (Borduin & Henggeler, 1981; Bornstein, Hayes & Painter, 1998; Rowe, Pan & Ayoub, 2005). Parents with higher levels of education tend to talk for longer periods of time, talk more per unit of time, and use more words when they engage in conversations with their children (Walker et al., 1994). Parents who have more formal schooling tend to have more knowledge about language and literacy development in their children. This knowledge influences how they communicate and interact with their
children (Rowe, 2008). As stated earlier, children need several repeated exposures to a word before it is learned; therefore children learn their first words from the speakers in the environment in which they are raised (Hart & Risley, 1995). The level of education attained by the parent positively correlates with a child’s vocabulary (Dollaghan, 1999) showing that the higher the education, the higher the vocabulary of the parent, and therefore the higher the child’s vocabulary. Barratt and Roach (1995) found that the education levels of mothers directly correlated with the level of reading and enrichment activities they provided for their children. This in turn correlated to the child’s reading and vocabulary skills in school. Parent education has been shown to directly correlate with a child’s vocabulary and language skills. The research has proven that parent’s education can directly influence a child’s vocabulary and language development. It is an important piece to the puzzle when looking at closing the vocabulary gap between all children.

Exposure to books. Children’s literature present more advanced, less familiar vocabulary than everyday speech (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Therefore, when children listen to books being read aloud, they have the opportunity to stretch their existing oral vocabularies and be introduced to more advanced words and concepts. The form and feel of written language is a different language structure than spoken language. The fullness of a person’s word bank is directly related to their exposure to print. Reading to young children can be a major stimulus for vocabulary development. The talk around storybooks can be cognitively challenging (De Temple & Snow, 2003) and encourages students to think and ask questions about words and word meanings. By asking
open-ended questions rather than simple closed questions (yes or no) children will develop lengthier and richer responses, show better comprehension of story events, and articulate their ideas in thoughtful and relevant ways. Open-ended questions offer children the opportunity to delve deeply into the information they hear during read-alouds, while also giving the opportunity to increase their comprehension and language growth (Beck & McKeown, 2003). The more children are read to the more skills they develop to ask questions about what they hear. Reading aloud to children also builds a stronger knowledge base allowing them to connect one text to another text, a text to oneself, and eventually text to the greater world. Being able to make these connections will benefit students throughout their education.

**Gender.** There are mixed reviews on whether gender plays a role in language development and vocabulary. Research shows that the language centers of girls’ brains develop earlier than boys and that there are distinct learning differences between how boys and girls brains function (Sax, 2006). However, some research has shown that there is no gender gap when it comes to language, or that the gap is narrowing to the point of closing altogether (Hyde & Linn, 1988). Though there are many studies showing that boys and girls brains function differently (Cahill, 2005; Gurian & Stevens, 2004; Sax, 2006) the gap in language development is debatable. Due to the mixed reviews of the effects of gender on vocabulary and language development, I will document the gender of the participants in my research, but will not dig further into the influences of gender on vocabulary.
Many factors can influence student vocabulary knowledge, also considered the student’s foundation or background of vocabulary. The research has shown that these influences directly relate to the student’s vocabulary knowledge and academic success. Of these influences, research has shown that socioeconomics and exposure to books seem to be the largest indicators of a child’s vocabulary and language development (Beck & McKeown, 2003; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; De Temple & Snow, 2003; Hart & Risley, 1995, 2003). Of the influences I researched, the mixed reviews when it comes to gender and family dynamics, make these two sub categories seems to have the least impact on a child’s vocabulary (Cahill, 2005; Gurian & Stevens, 2004; Jones & Adamson, 1987; Oshima-Takane & Derevensky, 1990; Pine, 1995; Sax, 2006). Student background vocabulary knowledge is not something we as teachers can control. However the vocabulary instruction in our classroom is the start to closing this gap in language and vocabulary.

Vocabulary Instruction

Research reveals a significant vocabulary gap in our nation’s schools, as well as a lack of direct vocabulary instruction and effective read-alouds in many primary-grade classrooms (National Reading Panel, 2000). While language and achievement gaps are cause for concern, research reveals that quality school instruction can provide one avenue for closing these gaps (Baumann, Kame’enui, & Ash, 2003; Blachowicz & Fisher, 2011; National Reading Panel, 2000). Effective vocabulary instruction and classroom read-alouds are proven to positively impact the development of vocabulary and comprehension skills for all students, and are particularly important for those students
who enter school with a vocabulary deficit (Moses, 2005). There is strong evidence to support that providing vocabulary instruction not only improves students’ reading comprehension and writing quality, but also their listening vocabulary and their speaking vocabulary (Joshi, 2006; Kame’enui & Baumann, 2012). Vocabulary knowledge, including both oral and written vocabulary, is critically important for a child’s success in school (Kamil et al., 2008). The term vocabulary instruction can encompass a variety of methods, activities, and techniques that in the end, teach words and their meanings.

According to the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), scientific research on vocabulary reveals that vocabulary is learned in two ways; indirectly, hearing/being exposed to words and directly, words and word knowledge that needs to be taught (2001). Children learn the meaning of many words just through everyday experiences with oral and written language including conversations with adults, being read to, and reading independently. Direct instruction provides students with specific word instruction and word-learning strategies which can deepen knowledge of vocabulary in a given text leading to better understanding and comprehension of what is being read (NIFL, 2001). The National Reading Panel (2000) suggested six guidelines for what makes an effective vocabulary program which include; a) building a word-rich environment where students are immersed in words both incidentally and intentionally to develop word awareness, b) developing independent word learners, c) using instructional strategies that not only teach vocabulary but also model good word learning behaviors, d) providing explicit instruction drawing on multiple sources of meaning, e) using assessments that match the goal of instruction, f) integrating vocabulary instruction across the curriculum. In 2010
the National Reading Technical Assistance Center (NRTAC) reviewed current research on vocabulary instruction and found that frequent exposure to targeted vocabulary, explicit instruction of targeted vocabulary, and questioning/language engagement from the teacher all significantly promoted word knowledge and usage in students. Using these guidelines and research, I will look more closely at methods and techniques for vocabulary instruction.

**Four types of vocabulary.** A person’s vocabulary develops with age and learning. There are four main types of vocabulary: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Listening and speaking constitute spoken vocabulary, where reading and writing constitute written vocabulary. Children begin to acquire listening and speaking vocabularies many years before they start to build reading and writing vocabularies. Spoken language forms the basis for written language. Montgomery (2007) defined the types as follows: *Listening vocabulary*, which are the words we hear and understand. Starting in the womb, fetuses can detect sounds as early as 16 weeks. Furthermore, babies are listening during all their waking hours – and people continue to learn new words throughout life. *Speaking vocabulary* are the words we use when we speak. Our speaking vocabulary is relatively limited as most adults use a mere 5,000 to 10,000 words for all their conversations and instructions. *Reading vocabulary* are the words we understand when we read text. We can read and understand many words that we do not use in our speaking vocabulary. Reading vocabulary is a literate person’s second largest vocabulary, second to listening. If you are not a reader, you cannot “grow” your vocabulary. *Writing vocabulary* is the words we can retrieve when we write to express ourselves. We
generally find it easier to explain ourselves orally, using facial expression and intonation to help get our ideas across, then find just the right words to communicate the same ideas in writing. Our writing vocabulary is strongly influenced by the words we can spell. Each type of vocabulary has a different purpose for vocabulary development and one type facilitates growth in the other types (Montgomery, 2007). Understanding the types of vocabulary is an important aspect to understanding the methods of vocabulary instruction and its effectiveness on vocabulary growth.

**Read-alouds.** Reading aloud to children, sometimes called *shared storybook reading*, is a proven way for students to develop and expand their vocabulary (Blachowicz & Obrochta, 2007; Robbins & Ehri, 1994). Children’s books represent more advanced and less common vocabulary than everyday speech (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998), giving children the opportunity for new words and vocabulary concepts. Studies have concluded that students can learn word meanings incidentally from read-alouds in the classroom (Blachowicz & Obrochta, 2007). “Dialogic reading” a process coined by Whitehurst and his associates (Whitehurst et al., 1999) involves the student in discussion during and after listening to a book by asking questions, adding information, or prompting students to describe what they heard. Children with a less rich initial vocabulary are not as likely to learn new vocabulary and concepts incidentally and therefore need a more designed approach such as dialogic reading to maximize their learning during read-alouds (Robbins & Ehri, 1994). Neuman and Dickinson (2001) found several ways read-alouds in both school and home settings can increase student vocabulary learning. Some of the strategies included are; reading books multiple times,
being read with instead of just read to, and having students read books in small groups.

Blachowicz and Obrochta (2007) researched a program called vocabulary visits in which read-alouds are tweaked and approached in a step by step format for building vocabulary.

Beck, McKeown and Kucan (2002) put words into three tiers of vocabulary. The first tier is considered the most basic words that do not need to be taught in school. The second tier contains more robust words that come from interactions with text and are not found as often in everyday spoken language. The third tier words are those whose frequency of use is quite low and are often limited to specific domains. These words are best learned when needed in a content area or teaching a specific topic (see Appendix A for examples of words from each of the three tiers). Through their research and understanding of the importance of vocabulary, Beck and McKeown (2001) created Text Talk, a method for teaching vocabulary during read-alouds. A 2002 research study confirmed that Text Talk was effective at enhancing student vocabulary development. The study compared students receiving Text Talk instruction with a matched control group of students who continued with their standard instruction (Moses, 2005).

Read-alouds are one instructional tool that has indicated positive results in learning vocabulary words and proven to increase student vocabulary and exposure to words.

Word-rich classroom. Exposure to books and having a “flood of books” (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1998) available to students to ensure many and varied experiences with books is one critical aspect of a word rich classroom. Blachowicz and Fisher (2004) recommended a “flood of words” in which teachers immerse students in word rich environments to maximize both intentional and incidental word learning. Word
play is the ability to manipulate, combine, and recombine components of words is an important part of learning vocabulary and develops metalinguistic reflection on words as objects to be manipulated for humor and knowledge (Nagy & Scott, 2001). Word play is another element of the word-rich classroom that is critical to the development of word consciousness in students and leads to greater incidental word learning. Students need to be surrounded by words and motivated to learn them. When vocabulary-based activities, games, and other materials and resources are available for students to play with, it helps create an environment that encourages fun in learning new words and concepts. Word play enhances the word-rich classroom by providing another way for students to encounter, practice, and become more interested in words and literacy. Playing with words is a way for students to practice cognitive flexibility, or the ability to look at the same thing in different ways. Creating and sharing puns, jokes and riddles is a fun way to enhance meta-cognitive thinking in students. Traditional vocabulary instruction has focused on students learning the meaning of words and is typically more receptive and not constructive (Watts, 1995). Nagy and Scott (2001) stated that vocabulary instruction should be considered as metalinguistic development or the ability to reflect on, manipulate, combine and recombine the components of words is an important aspect of vocabulary learning (Tunmer, Herriman, & Nesdale, 1988). There is convincing research that classrooms that (1) create a word rich environment; (2) call on students to reflect metacognitively on words and word parts; (3) encourage active engagement with discussion; and (4) emphasize relatedness in rehearsal and practice encourages students’ incidental word learning as well as developing word consciousness, interest and
motivation (Kame’enui & Baumann, 2012). Word play is a way to put the “fun” back in vocabulary development - one of the most fundamental aspects of learning in the early school years (Kame’enui & Baumann, 2012). Read alouds and playing with words are important aspects for learning vocabulary, however explicit instruction is also needed in order for students to build and retain word knowledge.

Explicit instruction. Vocabulary instruction should provide students with opportunities to encounter words repeatedly and in a variety of contexts (Stahl, 2005). Student word knowledge is not just in being able to give a definition, but also an understanding of how a given word functions in different contexts. This skill requires guidance through both direct instruction and practice in everyday speaking and writing. Nash and Snowing (2006) studied the effects of teaching new vocabulary words using definitions versus using strategies for obtaining word meaning from written context.

Their findings indicated that although both methods showed knowledge of the vocabulary that was taught, the group that derived word meanings from context had significantly better knowledge and comprehension of text containing the targeted vocabulary three months later. Bauman, Ware, and Edwards (2007) used Graves’s four components of effective vocabulary instruction “(1) providing rich and varied language experiences; (2) teaching individual words; (3) teaching word-learning strategies; and (4) fostering word consciousness” (Graves, 2006, p. 5) on students’ word knowledge and appreciation. They found that by immersing students in a vocabulary-rich environment and providing them with instruction in words and word-learning strategies, they developed greater breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge. The number of words that
should be taught has received continued attention in the research literature (Stahl, 1999). Through several years of researching vocabulary and reading, Beck and McKeown (2002) have concluded that approximately 100 words per grade represents a reasonable number of words to teach for children in kindergarten and first grade. Selecting the specific 100 words to teach takes careful consideration. Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) advised using tier two vocabulary words as they do not represent familiar objects and actions, nor are they considered content area vocabulary but are words that are easily relatable to concepts that children already understand. This makes tier two words successful words for direct instruction because teachers can easily explain them in a variety of ways. Tier two words can be thought of as “general but sophisticated” (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002, p. 18). Beck and McKeown (2007) maintained that sophisticated words are particularly appropriate for instruction. These words are less likely to be encountered or learned through typical interaction with academic materials or everyday conversation. Words selected for instruction should be words that are more sophisticated labels for familiar concepts that students already understand. These words expand both vocabulary breadth and depth. Vocabulary breadth is expanded, because these sophisticated words add to the number of words a child knows. Vocabulary depth is increased, because each of the new words can be linked to familiar words, which enhances understanding of both the new and familiar words.

**Modeling.** Multiple encounters with a word is important to developing vocabulary, but it is not enough (Armbruster et al., 2001). In order for children to actually learn and use the new words, teachers need to make sure children are allowed to make
connections with prior knowledge and experiences. There are many different strategies we can use to foster understanding of new and more sophisticated words, but one of the simplest and most powerful approaches is to frequently model sophisticated labels for familiar concepts. Using more sophisticated language throughout daily classroom routines gives students the opportunity to understand and eventually own these words in their own vocabularies. One of the biggest barriers to vocabulary growth is the simplistic way many teachers talk to children or use words beneath a students' level of understanding (Lane & Allen, 2010). Simplistic vocabulary may be appropriate for initial instruction, but once students develop a basic understanding, it is time to elevate instructional language to enhance students' vocabularies. Teachers must model correct and sophisticated words so students are hearing and seeing them used on a daily basis (see Appendix B for sophisticated words that can be used in classroom routines).

Modeling vocabulary and word learning using word games, puzzles, contests and other playful activities develops awareness in a motivating and playful way (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2004). Modeling how to find interesting words while reading and using that opportunity to dig deeper into words, is an authentic example of how discovering words works. Helping students create personal word books or dictionaries of interesting words they come across in their reading, encourages independent learning and seeking of word meanings. As students get older, they are faced with more challenging assignments and high-stakes assessments in reading and writing. Having an expanded vocabulary will support them. When teachers create a word-rich classroom environment with more
sophisticated models for students to follow it gives the students an extra boost for future academic success.

The development of vocabulary is critical in learning other academic skills (Graves, 2011). Vocabulary has been associated with improved reading comprehension skills, speaking fluency, and later academic success (Wise, Sevcik, Morris, Lovett, & Wolf, 2007; Walker, Greenwood, Hart, & Carta, 1994). Research focusing on vocabulary instruction development has shown that exposing and reading a diverse selection of books while also incorporating explicit vocabulary instruction are essential to helping students build a large vocabulary in school (Graves, 2011). I did not find any opponents to the benefits of vocabulary instruction. Therefore I have to believe what the research shows and that the instruction of vocabulary is needed to close the vocabulary gap. The increasing gap in vocabulary in my own classroom shows that vocabulary exposure and instruction are needed and an essential parts of student's vocabulary growth and overall academic success. Through this project I will implement a daily routine incorporating read-a-louds and explicit vocabulary instruction in a word-rich environment that invites students to see and play with words in multiple contexts.

**Vocabulary Assessment**

Blachowicz and Fisher (2011) stated that when thinking of assessing vocabulary one should think of vocabulary knowledge regarding *depth* and *breadth*. The *depth* of one’s vocabulary can be defined as how much is known about the word and whether it can be recognized in text or conversation. The *breadth* of one’s vocabulary is the knowledge of how a word is connected to other words.
**Depth.** The ability to recall or recite a definition of a word does not always show ownership or the ability to use the word effectively. Students can show they have gained depth in vocabulary usage when they are able to use the words in meaningful ways in their speaking and writing. Research shows that depth of word knowledge predicts reading performance (Perfetti & Hart, 2002). Depth of knowledge of vocabulary can be assessed in a variety of ways including; observations during discussions and writing, students making lists of interesting words they encounter in their reading, mini conferences where students are asked to use selected words in sentences to show understanding, and written or oral word recognition tests (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2011).

**Breadth.** The breadth of vocabulary knowledge is regarded as vocabulary size. Vocabulary breadth is concerned with the number of words that a learner at a certain level knows (Nation, 1990). The ability to connect the vocabulary word to other words and understand the relationship between those words can be measured during word work/word play activities that encourage students to see the connection and apply it accordingly. Assessing vocabulary breadth can be done through mapping or graphic organizers and can reveal what students have learned about groups of words or related terms (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2011).

To authentically and holistically evaluate and assess vocabulary, one must think of how vocabulary grows (depth) and how vocabulary deepens (breadth) in students use of words during discussions, lessons, and writing (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2011).

**Receptive/ productive vocabulary.** The terms receptive and productive when related to vocabulary knowledge encompasses all aspects of knowing a word. Nation
(1990) related these terms to the receptive skills of listening and reading, and the productive skills of speaking and writing. When the meaning of words is retrieved and understood by the learner through exposure to written or oral input the process is considered receptive vocabulary, whereas when word are retrieved and produce the appropriate written or spoken vocabulary it is considered productive vocabulary. Both receptive and productive processes will be used to measure vocabulary growth and knowledge through this project by exposing the students to vocabulary during read-alouds and explicit instruction in word usage in writing and speaking daily to see if the vocabulary truly does carry over.

**Student vocabulary in speaking.** Children's listening and speaking competence is higher than their reading and writing competence (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). They can understand much more sophisticated content presented orally than they can read it independently and can represent vocabulary knowledge verbally better than in writing, especially at the beginning of the year. Therefore it is important to assess student vocabulary in their speaking as well as their writing. Comprehensive assessments will include receptive vocabulary which involves the understanding of spoken words and expressive or productive vocabulary which involves using or naming a word. Receptive and productive vocabulary have been shown to be strong predictors to beginning reading achievement and comprehension (Wise et al., 2007). Assessing student vocabulary in speaking will include informal observations and notes in the teacher journal during large and small group discussions.
Student vocabulary in reading and writing. Assessing student usage of vocabulary in their reading and writing will develop through the year as the student’s reading and writing develops. Through read-alouds students will hear dynamic language and how word choice can make a story more exciting (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). These examples will give students the opportunity to think about their own word choice and how they can make their own writing more exciting and enjoyable for the audience to read or listen to. Using informal assessments such as tally marks for learned words used with meaning and understanding in writing as well as student feedback during author’s chair can be added to the teacher journal for evidence of growth in word choice.

On-going assessment for How does daily exposure to vocabulary through Text Talk carry over into the speaking and writing of first grade students? will include observations of students during discussion and conversation, curriculum based assessments, words learned in student writing, and word monitors/checklists. Much of the observation notes and checklists will be documented in the teacher journal that will be updated on a weekly basis. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Revised (PPVT-R) (Dunn & Dunn, 1981) will be given as a pre assessment in September and a post assessment in April. Northwest Evaluation Association, Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP’s) (n.d.) testing using the teacher reports and normative data will compare student growth from Fall (September) to Spring (May). Archival documents will be used to learn about the past, trends. I will be looking at district NWEA MAP’s data to see if there are trends in vocabulary growth in grade levels.
Summary of Chapter Two

In this chapter, literature was reviewed in the areas of student vocabulary knowledge, vocabulary instruction, and assessing vocabulary in classroom to see How does daily exposure to vocabulary through Text Talk carry over into the speaking and writing of first grade students? Through this research I have found there are several components involved in developing a child’s vocabulary and language development. Student vocabulary knowledge, or the vocabulary the student has already been exposed to, seems to be the biggest indicator of language development and the ability to learn and make new words and concepts their own. Exposure to language and vocabulary, or the lack there of, can be indicated through many factors in a child’s life. Socioeconomics, parent’s education, and family dynamics such as birth order can all influence the exposure of language in a child’s environment. The research shows that children need to hear a word multiple times before they are able to apply that word to their own lives. One way this can be done is through the vocabulary instruction in the classroom. This research helped to put a method to the instruction. Daily vocabulary instruction needs to include read-alouds, a word rich environment, and explicit instruction. Read-alouds give students the opportunity to hear more advanced, less common vocabulary than everyday speech and in multiple contexts. Having a word rich environment gives students the chance to play with words and see the power in words. And finally providing explicit instruction in words and word-learning strategies, students developed greater breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge. The information learned in this chapter will guide the
process as I attempt to figure out, *How does daily exposure to vocabulary through Text Talk carry over into the speaking and writing of first grade students?*

**Introduction to Chapter Three**

In chapter three, I describe the methods and procedures I hope to use to increase student vocabulary in my class including read-alouds, a word rich classroom, and explicit instruction and how that might look on a daily basis. I also include in this chapter the forms of assessment used such as NWEA MAP’s Fall to Spring testing scores, checklists, learned words used in student writing, observations and teacher reflections, and parent surveys/interviews to see if spoken language at home has been influenced. Finally, this chapter provides information about the projects setting and participants, including how the Human Subject Review requirements will be addressed and met.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Research focusing on vocabulary instruction development has shown that exposure to literature and reading a diverse selection of books while also incorporating explicit vocabulary instruction are essential to helping students build a large vocabulary in school (Graves, 2011). Through the research and literature review in chapter two, I brought the resources and methods of read alouds and direct instruction to my classroom to answer, *How does daily exposure to vocabulary through Text Talk carry over into the speaking and writing of first grade students?* This chapter describes how I brought these strategies I learned to life in my own classroom and how it looked on a daily basis. This chapter also looks at the assessment and measurements used to determine if daily exposure to vocabulary did indeed carry over into student speaking and writing. Finally, this chapter includes information on the school demographics, participants, and Human Subject Review procedures that were in place.

Chapter two reviewed research on *How does daily exposure to vocabulary through Text Talk carry over into the speaking and writing of first grade students?* The research was broken down into three sections. The first section looked at student vocabulary knowledge, the second section focused on vocabulary instruction, and the third section looked at assessing vocabulary in the classroom. The research supports the importance of early and frequent exposure to language in order for children to develop a word-rich vocabulary. The research also agreed on three important areas that should be
included in vocabulary instruction in the classroom that include, read-alouds, explicit vocabulary instruction, and a word-rich environment. Through this chapter I show how each of these areas were incorporated into my classroom, and what it looked like on a daily basis. Finally, an overview of the assessment and data that was collected proves or disproves if daily exposure to vocabulary through read-alouds, explicit instruction and a word rich environment did in fact carry over into a student’s speaking and writing.

Rationale

The rationale for this project was the widening gap in vocabulary knowledge and usage between my students that was becoming more and more obvious to me as a teacher. Students come to school with a variety of life experiences that overflow into their language. Through this project I wanted to bring some closure to the gap in vocabulary and even the playing field of my students.

Another reason for this study included the district test scores on the NWEA MAP’s vocabulary strand and third through fifth grade MCA scores. The school wide (kindergarten through fifth grade) NWEA MAP’s data for vocabulary showed 46% of student scored below average, 21% average, and 32% above average in Fall of 2014. School wide MCA scores in 2014 show a 57% proficiency rate in reading. The room for growth in both of these standardized assessments is a school wide issue. If I can build a stronger vocabulary foundation in first grade, which will hopefully carry over into all the grades.
The research reviewed in chapter two supports read-alouds, explicit instruction, and a word rich environment as best practices when it comes to student growth in vocabulary and language. How each of these elements is incorporated into the classroom has to be systematic and deliberate. Hiebert and colleagues (2004) research showed that the vocabulary instruction offered in many basal reading series is not effective enough to make up the gap in vocabulary that is being seen throughout the nation. Looking at the current Language Arts curriculum (Houghton, Mifflin, & Harcourt, 2010) used in our district I would have to agree with Hiebert et al. (2004). Although there are strengths in this curriculum, the vocabulary and word choice seem to fall short when it comes to rich vocabulary exposure. Based on the research I did in chapter two, I have decided that the model I will use as the foundation for daily vocabulary exposure in my classroom is Beck and McKeown’s *Text Talk* (2001). The instructional components of *Text Talk* provide direct, rich, and active vocabulary instruction by incorporating research-based best practices that have been proven to positively influence children’s vocabulary development and word knowledge through read-alouds and direct vocabulary instruction (Moses, 2005).

*Text Talk*. Isabel Beck, PhD and Margaret McKeown, PhD have collaborated for over a decade to conduct scientifically based research on effective vocabulary instruction (Beck & McKeown, 2001). The *Text Talk* curriculum model has three distinct areas of vocabulary exposure and instruction which include read-alouds, active talk, and direct instruction. The foundation of the program starts with read-aloud selections that have
been chosen for their robust words, rich content, and balance of text to illustrations (see Appendix C for examples of read-alouds and vocabulary words). Active talk engages students in actively using words through speaking, enriching and deepening students' understanding of word meanings through open-ended questions, follow-up questions, word explanations, and smart use of background knowledge. Finally, the direct vocabulary instruction combines word definitions which are “child friendly” and easily understandable to students with rich instruction that requires children to engage in active talk about meaning. Vocabulary words are repeated and experienced in a variety of contexts throughout the lessons to deepen students’ knowledge and create student ownership of the words (Beck & McKeown, 2001). Activities such as “finish the idea”, “what’s the word sentences”, concept charts, drawing conclusions, and comparing past words with current ones are all ways students can deepen their understanding and meaning of the vocabulary word. Each week, a copy of the cover of that week’s read aloud is added to the bulletin board along with the vocabulary words from that story. Students used the bulletin board as a visual reminder of our words, as well as the books where the vocabulary words were introduced. Oftentimes, students would find the word and look at the book to jog their memories if word meanings had been forgotten. By incorporating this model of vocabulary instruction into my classroom I was able to begin to answer How does daily exposure to vocabulary through Text Talk carry over into the speaking and writing of first grade students?
What it looked like on a daily basis. The *Text Talk* Curriculum combines five sessions per read aloud or lesson. I broke the sessions up into a weekly vocabulary routine that I followed for each read aloud throughout the year (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Weekly Text Talk lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop language and comprehension</td>
<td>Develop comprehension and introduce vocabulary</td>
<td>Develop vocabulary</td>
<td>Integrate vocabulary and comprehension</td>
<td>Review, assess, and maintain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduct book author, illustrator, picture walk</td>
<td>Return to the story: Re-read story using <em>Text Talk</em> sticky notes that provide point of use modeling and questioning to prompt making meaning through language and not just the illustrations.</td>
<td>Rich, robust vocabulary instruction using playful, engaging activities and discussion prompts.</td>
<td>Confirm understanding by reviewing words in sentences.</td>
<td>Vocabulary wrap up and review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read book aloud</td>
<td>Think and talk</td>
<td>Students apply words in a variety of situations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Each lesson focuses on a specific comprehension skill such as: summarizing, story structure, and problem/solution</td>
<td>Graphic organizers encourages students to visually explore word uses and relationships.</td>
<td>Connect the words to the story.</td>
<td>Assess students using words in true/false statements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Explore the literary element (fiction, folk tale, realistic fiction, etc.)</td>
<td>Maintain by using vocabulary words from previous stories that connect and enhance comprehension of current story.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to ensure I was implementing all the important components of vocabulary including; read-alouds, explicit instruction, and a word rich environment throughout the day, and not just during the *Text Talk* lesson, I created a table showing when vocabulary fit into the other subjects as well (see Table 2).
Table 2.

Vocabulary throughout the day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Instructional Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning Meeting</td>
<td>Word-of-the-day activities (Endless Alphabet) Word-play activities (Journey’s curriculum word warm up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading/Language Arts</td>
<td>Read-aloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily 5 (read to self, word work, partner read, writing, and teacher instruction from Lang. Arts curriculum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Words Their Way Spelling sort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instruction in self-selected and teacher-selected words from books read or compositions being written.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mini lessons on word-learning strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher–student reading conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Daily math vocabulary words (MCA and NWEA list of words to know, Everyday Math/Singapore lesson vocabulary).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science/Social Studies</td>
<td>Instruction in specific subject-matter vocabulary. Word-learning strategy instruction integrated into social studies/science lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content-related read-alouds and trade book reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writers workshop</td>
<td>Shared writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing conferences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using this outline as a guide, I was able to expose students to vocabulary in a specific and deliberate way. This was a yearlong project and I started getting permission from parents and collecting data in September. The vocabulary instruction and exposure happened throughout the year with the final data taken in May after the NWEA testing was complete.
Setting

District demographics. The district is in the rural Midwest and has a population of 450 student’s kindergarten through twelfth grade. The student demographics of the district are 73% White, 16% American Indian/Alaska Native, 4% Hispanic/Latino, 1% Black/African American, and 6% Two or more races. Forty percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch. There are no English language learners at this time in the district. The district houses all three schools, elementary, middle, and high school in the same building and also has a pre-school which currently has 56 students attending half-day sessions two or three times a week.

This research took place in my own first grade class. The total population of the elementary school is 168 students grades kindergarten through fifth grade. Student demographics for the elementary are 72% White, 11% Native American/Alaska Native, 8% Hispanic/Latino, 1% Black/African American, and 7% Two or more races. Forty four percent of the students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade receive free or reduced lunch.

Participants. The participants in this project were my first grade students. There were 12 students for the first three quarters and 11 students for the last quarter. Of the 12 students, 5 are female and 7 are male. According to the beginning of the year census that parents filled out, student demographics are; 75% White, 17% Native American/Alaska Native, 4% Hispanic/Latino, and 4% Asian, Pacific Islander. Twenty five percent of the students identified as two or more races.
School background. The school serves the whole county. Three bus routes have over an hour travel time to get to school. The county has three charter schools, two located at the ends of the county serving K-5 students, and one located in town serving grades K-8. The addition of the charter schools, while some deemed necessary especially due to location, has made some new challenges for the school including loss of enrollment and a split in community support and involvement.

Human Subject Review

All students in the class received the same instruction, however only students with signed parental permission slips were included in the data of this research. Permission forms were sent to all parents/guardians in September and prior to any data collection. Permission from the Principal to conduct this research in my class was also included. There are no names on any of the final data including parent surveys, observations, teacher journals, and NWEA MAP test results.

Methods

A convergent parallel mixed methods design (Creswell, 2014) was used to collect data for this project. Using a convergent parallel mixed method design allowed me to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, analyze it separately, and then compare the results to see How does daily exposure to vocabulary through Text Talk carry over into the speaking and writing of first grade students?

The qualitative data collected included parent surveys, observations, archival documents, checklist, and teacher journal. Quantitative data includes NWEA MAP’s test normative data, and curriculum assessments.
Qualitative Data

Parent survey. A parent survey was sent out in September and May asking parents about student vocabulary usage in speaking, reading and writing at home. Using Mills (2014) suggestions, some of the survey will have a Likert scale, while other questions will be open ended, giving a variety of question formats. I chose to use relationship to student as opposed to names on this survey to ensure more confidentiality for the parents (see Appendix C).

Observations. Teachers have countless opportunities to observe, monitor and adjust instruction based on verbal and nonverbal interactions in their classroom (Mills, 2014). I observed the vocabulary of my students in varying degrees of participation (active, privileged, and passive) with varying degrees of how the field notes (observe and record everything, observe and look for nothing, and looking for paradoxes) were taken. I designated one day a week for observations. The degree of participation and field notes changed weekly, but all observations were documented in the teacher journal using the teacher journal template (see Appendix E).

Checklists/tally tickets. Each week the vocabulary words were added to the word wall next to a picture of the read-aloud. Tally’s tickets (see Appendix F) were used by the teacher and students to monitor vocabulary words being said, wrote, heard, and read. This encouraged students to use the words being taught, and also listening for those words in others. The information gathered from the tally tickets was incorporated into the “speaking” and “writing” sections of a class checklist (see Appendix G) to see what students were using the words and in what manner. The tally tickets gave me data to see
if past words were continued to be used, or if only the new words for that week were
being represented.

**Teacher journal.** A teacher journal provides a place to record observations, events, 
thoughts, and feelings (Mills, 2014). The journal was a place to reflect on how I felt the
daily vocabulary was going and where improvements needed to happen. The journal was
also a confidential place for notes and record keeping on student vocabulary usage in
their speaking and writing. The journal was done weekly.

**Quantitative Data**

**Curriculum based assessment.** The weekly true/false assessments provided in the
*Text Talk* curriculum were used to measure student understanding and usage of
vocabulary words from each read aloud throughout the year. An assessment of fifty
true/false statements containing vocabulary words from the *Text Talk* curriculum was
given at the beginning and end of the year (see Appendix H).

**Standardized tests.** Standardized test data is often reported as percentile ranks and
provides teachers with a snapshot of how students are performing on a given subject
relative to other students taking the test (Mills, 2014). The Peabody Picture Vocabulary
Test Revised (PPVT-R) was given as a pre-assessment in September and a
post-assessment in April. The NWEA MAP’s test was used to look at the vocabulary
strand to compare my student’s growth from the Fall to Spring with other first graders in
normative data.

**Archival documents.** The archival documents are both qualitative and quantitative
and will be used to learn about the past, identify trends, and help the researcher
understand the present (Mills, 2014). I also looked at district NWEA MAP’s data to see if there are trends in vocabulary growth in grade levels. I began looking at the archival data in October once the Fall round of NWEA testing was completed. I compared the data from this year with previous years, looking at individual grade level norms and for trends in vocabulary growth.

Summary of Chapter Three

Chapter three looked at the rationale for why I thought it was important to ask *How does daily exposure to vocabulary through Text Talk carry over into the speaking and writing of first grade students?* and the model I used to expose students to vocabulary. The *Text Talk* model of vocabulary instruction has three distinct areas of vocabulary exposure and instruction which include read-alouds, active talk, and direct instruction. The data was collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods including parent surveys, observations, archival documents, checklist, teacher journal, NWEA MAP’s test normative data, and teacher made assessments. Finally this chapter looked at the demographics of the setting and the participants for the research.

Introduction to Chapter Four

Chapter four outlines the findings in regards to whether daily exposure to vocabulary carried over into the speaking and writing of first graders. I describe the results of my quantitative and qualitative research by showing the methods of data collection and the outcomes the data showed. The data was collected throughout the research and was analyzed and compared to the research and findings in chapter two.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

In chapter four, I describe the results of my research in answering *How does daily exposure to vocabulary through Text Talk carry over into the speaking and writing of first grade students?* This model has three distinct areas of vocabulary exposure and instruction including; read-alouds, active talk, and direct instruction. I describe the results of my research by showing the methods of data collection and the outcomes the data showed. In this chapter, I connect my results with the literature review from chapter two.

**Results of Data Collection.**

A convergent parallel mixed methods design (Creswell, 2014) was used to collect data for this project. Using a convergent parallel mixed method design allowed me to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, analyzes it separately, and then compares the results.

**Qualitative Data**

**Parent survey.** From the survey, I was able to determine that all of my students have been raised thus far in environments where words and books are prevalent. I found that all of the families use the public library, all have over 22 children’s books at home, most (10/12) read every day to their children where the other two families read a few times a week, and all families sit down for meals together with some talk between the entire family happening. De Temple and Snow (2003) stated that if the child’s environment supports word learning and gives them the opportunity to engage in conversations with adults, it therefore gives them the chance to use words they are in the
process of acquiring meaning. Meal time is an important time to practice conversational talk, and I discovered my students are eating and talking with their families. It was also interesting to find that all 12 of my students attended pre-school programs prior to Kindergarten. One student attended five full days a week (at the charter school in the west end of the county), one student attended five half days a week (Head Start in the east end of the county), and the other ten attended the pre-school at our school which is three half days a week. The experience of pre-school gave my students more exposure to language and vocabulary, and children need to have multiple exposures in multiple situations in order to own and understand a word or concept (Brabham et al., 2012; Hart & Risley, 2003). Looking at family dynamics I found that, seven of the students are the oldest sibling in the family, one is the middle child, and four are the youngest. My literature review came up inconclusive on the effects of birth order on vocabulary (Lowry, 2011, 2012) and I would have to agree as I did not see that there was any difference in vocabulary in regards to birth order. Ten of the parents (or at least the parent that filled out the survey) had an average to exceptional educational experience themselves and most households held at least a college degree. The level of education attained by the parent positively correlates with a child’s vocabulary (Dollaghan, 1999) showing that the higher the education, the higher the vocabulary of the parent, and therefore the higher the child’s vocabulary. With all the information I gathered from the survey/questionnaire, I felt my students had a strong foundation of language coming into first grade, and was even more interested to see how my research would play out throughout the year.
Observations. During most of my observations, I had an active or privileged participation role (Mills, 2014) as I was engaging students through conversations about their writing or doing explicit vocabulary instruction. I was able to have a more passive participation role (Mills, 2014) while observing students during independent morning work time, free writing, and choice time. The template (see Appendix E) was useful as I found after writing my observation, whether it be observe and record everything, observe and look for nothing, or looking for paradoxes, I could then go back through it and write the vocabulary words in the box with any notes that may be helpful later. What my observations yielded was that my students were actively taking a part in learning their vocabulary. Students would “quiz” each other on the words, make books of the words with pictures or stories to give the definition, tap their fingers together when they heard a word during an oral story or around school which was something we came up with to alleviate all the loud gasps from students when a word was heard. By quietly tapped their fingers, they could remember to put up a tally ticket when the story was over. Students challenged themselves and others to use the words in their writing also. On days we were sharing our work, students would pull out their pieces with the most vocabulary words to share. One student even challenged the others to see how many vocabulary words they heard in his story which was about a magical hike in the woods. There were 23 words in his story including; steep, hesitating, eager, boast, unexpected, satisfied, dashed, frightening, enormous, and gumption. Connecting words through word play is a way to put the “fun” back in vocabulary development - one of the most fundamental aspects of learning in the early school years (Kame‘enui & Baumann, 2012).
Checklists/tally tickets. This was by far my favorite piece of the research and data collection. Students really got into filling out tally tickets (see Appendix F) when they heard, said, read, or wrote a word. About once a week we would go through the tally tickets and whoever submitted it would have to tell the context of hearing, saying, reading, or writing the word. This kept the students accountable for the tally tickets they submitted and brought up a lot of wonderful conversations about words. We had 631 tally tickets when I collected my data in May, but the students continued once my study concluded. Figure 1 below shows the percentage of words heard, read, said or written on our collected tally tickets.

![Figure 1](image)

*Figure 1*. Percentage of vocabulary word usage on tally tickets.

These findings directly correlate with my literature review. Beck, McKeown, & Kucan (2002) found that children's listening and speaking competence is higher than their reading and writing competence. They can understand much more sophisticated content presented orally than they can read it independently and can represent vocabulary
knowledge verbally better than in writing, especially at the beginning of the year. The students heard and said more of the vocabulary words because that is where they are developmentally. Each type of vocabulary has a different purpose for vocabulary development and one type facilitates growth in the other types (Montgomery, 2007). Although this chart only shows 8% of students writing the vocabulary words, it only depicts the tally tickets handed in by students. As stated previously however, my teacher observations gave a much higher representation of vocabulary words being used in student writing that was not depicted in the tally ticket data.

**Teacher journal.** The teacher journal was used to record observations, checklists, and reflections. According to Mills (2014), teacher journals are a collection of descriptions and interpretations that teachers can reflect back on to improve teaching. Looking back through my teacher journal, I found that the actual student examples of how they were using the vocabulary words to be the most inspiring piece of the reflection. One theme that emerged as the year went on was the students referring back to the vocabulary words to use as examples for everyday lessons being taught. For example, when we were learning about the -ed and -ing endings, students would pick words off the vocabulary wall to add the endings, and when we were learning about action words, one student went over and started reading all the vocabulary words that were action words. I was continually amazed at how creative and excited the students were about the words we were learning. Their ideas about how to play with and use the words gave me some great feedback into how each student learned vocabulary. I had my visual learners that always preferred writing the words with an illustration, I had the writers who just wanted to write
what the words mean and use them in their writing, and I found I had some very verbal students who liked to describe words for others to guess. Tracking student examples throughout the year gave me feedback into if students stuck to one method such as always adding a picture to the word, or if they moved between the visual, written and verbal methods to build their vocabulary. The teacher journal was an efficient and practical place to store my observations and reflections. It was helpful to look back in the teacher journal to show how vocabulary was being used in my classroom.

**Quantitative Data**

**Curriculum based assessment.** Students were given a fifty question true/false assessment containing vocabulary words from the *Text Talk* curriculum (see Appendix G) at the beginning of the year, and at the end of the year. Seventy three percent of students made at least a 20% gain, while 45% made over a 35% gain (see Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Text Talk Assessment: Student Scores Fall and Spring](image)
Weekly assessments had an even greater success rate, as student’s scores averaged 90-100% each week. The curriculum was exciting for the students and fun to teach. The three method approach of read alouds, active talk, and direct instruction seems to show very strong vocabulary results in my first graders. This was a new curriculum this year so I do not have past data to compare my results; however the data shows that students took ownership of the words and retained vocabulary words throughout the year.

Standardized tests. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test Revised (PPVT-R) was given as a pre-assessment in September and a post-assessment in April. Student’s raw scores went up between 6-39 points from Fall to Spring. Percentiles in the Fall ranged from 18-98 increasing to 94-99 in the Spring (see Figure 3).

![Figure 3. PPVT-R percentiles.](image)

The data collected for short term stability (one year or less) by PPVT-R showed that the median raw score gain was 6.7 points. The raw score gain for the students in my class
ranged from 6-39 points, with four of the students making at least a 20 point gain. This showed a huge gain in receptive (hearing) vocabulary from Fall to Spring in my class.

The Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP’s) (https://www.nwea.org/assessments/map/) test was also given in the Fall and the Spring. Students went from 50% being in the high-high average range in the Fall to 73% in the Spring. Not only was the gain in the number of students moving into the high-high average range impressive, but also impressive was the percentage of students moving out of the low-low average range. In the Fall, 33% of the students fell into the low-low average range, while in the Spring only two students, or 18% remained. Although I do not have an actual typical percentage of growth for vocabulary alone in first grade, my students all made above the typical growth in reading given their beginning Rasch Unit (RIT) score (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. NWEA MAP’s 2015-2016 vocabulary strand.
Both of these standardized tests showed student growth in vocabulary from Fall to Spring.

Archival documents. The archival documents are both qualitative and quantitative and used to learn about the past, identify trends, and help to understand the present (Mills, 2014). I looked at district NWEA MAP’s data to see if there were trends in vocabulary growth in grade levels. What I found was that the percentage of students in the high-high average range in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade all went down from Fall to Spring during the 2014-2015 school year. I feel this is a direct effect of getting a new language arts curriculum that was still being learned by the teachers. Comparing last year’s data to this school year (2015-2016) of these three grades, the first graders were the only class that had higher percentages of high-high average in the Spring (65%) than in the Fall (32%). The kindergarten had 27% of their students in the high-high average range in Fall and 21% in Spring, whereas the second grade went from 50% in the Fall to 36% in the Spring (see Figure 5).
I feel this data supports that the *Text Talk* vocabulary curriculum used in the first grade this year had an extremely positive effect on vocabulary.

**Summary of Chapter Four**

This chapter described my research by examining the data collected and the results of using the *Text Talk* vocabulary curriculum in my classroom. The qualitative data showed through the parent survey/questionnaire that my students came in with a strong vocabulary and language foundation. My observations and the tally tickets showed that students were motivated to learn the words and use them in their speaking and writing. The quantitative data showed that my students learned the weekly words by getting 90-100% on weekly assessments, but also that they retained words throughout the
year as shown in the pre and post assessment. Both standardized tests also showed improvement in vocabulary and language in my students.

**Introduction to Chapter Five**

The fifth and final chapter of this Capstone will report the conclusions of my research. It compares and connects the results in this chapter with those in my literature review in chapter two. This chapter also examines and reviews the limitations of the research. Finally, I will include my reflection on what I have learned from the process and where I hope to go from here.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Chapter five is the conclusion to the capstone that asked the question, How does daily exposure to vocabulary through Text Talk carry over into the speaking and writing of first grade students? In recent years I have become even more passionate about language and vocabulary as I am beginning to see a gap between students with high exposure to rich language and vocabulary and those that have not experienced rich language widen in my class each year. Hart and Risley (2003) found that students coming from professional homes enter Kindergarten with exposure to about 30 million more words than children from economically disadvantaged homes. This number was unbelievably sad to me. Knowing that language is an essential key to learning (Kamil et al., 2008, National Institute for Literacy, 2001), I used the Text Talk (Beck & McKeown, 2005) vocabulary curriculum to see if daily exposure to read alouds in a vocabulary-rich environment while providing direct/explicit instruction my students would develop greater vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, enabling them to be better communicators both verbally and in their writing.

In this chapter, I reflect upon using the Text Talk vocabulary curriculum (Beck & McKeown, 2005) and the data collected to support that daily exposure to vocabulary does indeed carry over into first grade students speaking and writing. Next, the chapter will compare and validate my own findings with the findings in the literature review in chapter two. Finally, implications and limitations of the research will be addressed, ending with my hope for the future.
Major Findings

The findings of this research can be categorized into four key components. First, the exposure to words and books is an important building block to vocabulary learning and usage. Second, daily exposure to vocabulary does increase a student’s speaking and writing in first graders. Third, students were motivated to use learned vocabulary words in their speaking and writing. And finally, the Text Talk method of teaching vocabulary led to increased student learning and retention of vocabulary words.

Exposure to words and books. The qualitative data through the parent survey showed that all of my students have been raised thus far in environments where words and books are prevalent. I found that all of the families use the public library, all have over 22 children’s books at home, most (10/12) read every day to their children where the other two families read a few times a week, and all families sit down for meals together with some talk from the entire family happening. De Temple and Snow (2003) stated that if the child’s environment supports word learning and gives them the opportunity to engage in conversations with adults, it therefore gives them the chance to use words they are in the process of acquiring meaning. It was also interesting to find that all 12 of my students attended pre-school programs prior to Kindergarten. One student attended five full days a week (at the charter school in the west end of the county), one student attended five half days a week (Head Start in the east end of the county), and the other ten attended the pre-school at our school which is three half days a week. The experience of pre-school gave my students more exposure to language and vocabulary, and children need to have multiple exposures in multiple situations in order to own and understand a
word or concept (Brabham et al., 2012; Hart & Risley, 2003). In past years of experience, I have had students that did not have such a solid language foundation entering first grade and struggled through out the school year to catch up to their peers. The data collected in the parent survey showed that the students in this research project had multiple exposures to words and books prior to entering first grade. This exposure had already started building a foundation of words and word usage, which supported the process of new vocabulary words being carried over into the students speaking and writing.

**The importance of daily exposure.** What I learned from this research was that daily exposure to vocabulary through read alouds and explicit/direct instruction does in fact have a positive influence on the speaking and writing of first grade students. The data in chapter four validates that the *Text Talk* vocabulary curriculum (Beck & McKeown, 2005) used in the first grade this year had an extremely positive effect on vocabulary in student speaking and writing, as well as hearing and seeing (see Figure 1). Some of the major findings the data revealed included; the students came into first grade with a solid language foundation, students were motivated to learn the words, and that students learned and retained the words being taught (see Figure 2).

**Students motivated to learn vocabulary words.** My observations and the tally tickets showed that students were motivated to learn the words and use them in their speaking and writing. Students would “quiz” each other on the words, make books of the words with pictures or stories to give the definition, and tap their fingers together when they heard a word during an oral story to remember to put up a tally ticket when the story was over. Students challenged themselves and others to use the words in their writing
also. On days we were sharing our work, students would pull out their pieces with the most vocabulary words to share. The tally tickets were my favorite piece of the research and data collection. Students really got into filling out tally tickets (see Appendix F) when they heard, said, read, or wrote a word (see Figure 1). Going through the tally tickets and giving students a chance to tell about where/how they found the word brought up some exciting conversations about words and word meanings. Parents also observed an elevated interest in vocabulary in their child. Each week the words from that read aloud were sent home with definitions. Three of the families told me that they would wait for the list each week and then try to use the words themselves to see if the child would recognize them, which they did. One parent shared that their child had to have tally tickets in a special place at home so he could fill them out and bring them to school when words showed up. He would then sit at dinner and try to make conversation that would include all the words. She stated that even though she and her husband would chuckle a bit at the extreme effort, they were impressed that the words were being used correctly and not being said just to say them. The carry-over from school to home with these words is another testament to the success of this program.

*Text Talk leads to retention of words.* The quantitative data showed that my students learned the weekly words, but also that they retained words throughout the year as shown in the pre and post-assessment (see Figure 2). Weekly assessments had an even greater success rate, as student’s scores averaged 90-100% each week. The three method approach of read alouds, active talk, and direct instruction seems to show very strong vocabulary results in my first graders. Both the PPVT-R (Figure 3) and MAPs (Figures 4
and 5) standardized tests also showed improvement in vocabulary and language in my students. Some of the most interesting data I found was that the percentage of students in the high-high average range in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade all went down from Fall to Spring during the 2014-2015 school year. I feel this is a direct effect of getting a new language arts curriculum that was still being learned by the teachers. Comparing last year’s data to this school year (2015-2016) of these three grades, the first graders, who were the only class to incorporate the Text Talk curriculum, were the only class that had higher percentages of high-high average in the Spring than in the Fall (see Figure 5). The quantitative data supports that the Text Talk vocabulary curriculum used in the first grade this year had an extremely positive effect on vocabulary.

Comparing My Results with Literature Review

I will compare my own findings and the literature review in three sections. The first section looks at student vocabulary knowledge, the second section focus on vocabulary instruction, and the third section will look at assessing vocabulary.

Student vocabulary knowledge. Children need several exposures to a word before it is learned, therefore children learn their first words from among those of the environment they are raised (Hart & Risley, 1995). My findings from the parent survey/questionnaire indicated that all of my students have been raised thus far in environments where words and books are prevalent, giving them a strong language foundation entering first grade. Most of my students came from households with at least one parent holding a college degree. According to Walker et al. (1994), parents with higher levels of education tend to talk for longer periods of time, talk more per unit of
time, and use more words when they engage in conversations with their children. Parent education has been shown to directly correlate with a child’s vocabulary and language skills. The research has proven that parent’s education can directly influence a child’s vocabulary and language development. It is an important piece to the puzzle when looking at closing the vocabulary gap in children, a piece my students seem to have. The parent survey/questionnaire was also informative in showing how many books were in the households and how often students were read to. All of the households had over 22 children’s books and most students are read to everyday. Children’s books present more advanced, less familiar vocabulary than everyday speech (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Therefore, when children listen to books being read aloud, they have the opportunity to stretch their existing oral vocabularies and be introduced to more advanced words and concepts. The literature review supported my findings that my student’s backgrounds have given them a solid vocabulary foundation.

Vocabulary instruction. The reason for focusing on vocabulary for this research project was the gap in language I was seeing in my students, in addition to the lack of quality vocabulary instruction in our districts current language art curriculum. Looking at the NWEA MAP’s data from the last couple years in kindergarten through second grade I would have to say this showed to be true. The results this year of the first graders who were using the Text Talk (Beck & McKeown, 2005) vocabulary curriculum over the district curriculum were noticeably more positive than the kindergarten and second graders that were still just using the district curriculum (figure 5). Moses (2005) stated effective vocabulary instruction and classroom read-alouds are proven to positively
impact the development of vocabulary and comprehension skills for all students. I believe my data showed this through the tally tickets and students incorporating the vocabulary words into the everyday lessons as stated in the teacher journal. The method of using read alouds has been a proven way for students to develop and expand their vocabulary (Blachowicz & Obrochta, 2007; Robbins & Ehri, 1994). Children’s books represent more advanced and less common vocabulary than everyday speech (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998) giving children the opportunity for new words and vocabulary concepts. Other studies have concluded that students can learn word meanings incidentally from read-alouds in the classroom (Blachowicz & Obrochta, 2007). Through my teacher observations I was able to conclude that students were in fact learning and applying word meanings from our read alouds to everyday lessons and language.

Assessing vocabulary. Blachowicz and Fisher (2011) stated that when thinking of assessing vocabulary one should think of vocabulary knowledge in two ways, the depth or how much is known about the word and whether it can be recognized in text or conversation and the breadth or how the word is connected to other words. The Text Talk (Beck & McKeown, 2005) vocabulary curriculum is very solid when assessing both the depth and the breadth of vocabulary knowledge. Each read aloud had six vocabulary words that corresponded. Four of the words were directly from the text, while two of the words have conceptual meaning that was implied in the text (see Appendix C). After reading a read aloud, the vocabulary was introduced where word meanings were explained, discussed, and summarized. The vocabulary would then be developed using word associations and concept charts. Next the vocabulary words are integrated and
connected to past vocabulary words. Finally, there was review and assessment of the words. This process gave students a structure for learning vocabulary that they were able to carry over each week as the new read aloud was introduced. The student’s end of the week assessment scores continually averaged 90-100%, telling me that this method of instruction was effective and reliable. The pre and post assessment (see Figure 2) also showed that students learned, and were able to retain vocabulary word meanings throughout the year.

Implications

As a result of my research, I will definitely continue to use the Text Talk (Beck & McKeown, 2005) vocabulary curriculum in my first grade classroom. Considering my results, and the unreported results of the other section of first grade that were consistent with my findings, they too will continue to use Text Talk (Beck & McKeown, 2005). Due to the financial hardships of the district, part of the Text Talk (Beck & McKeown, 2005) curriculum for my classroom was purchased through a donation from the Parent Teacher Association. A second grant was written and received to purchase the Text Talk (Beck & McKeown, 2005) curriculum for the other section of first grade. The results of my research may also be used by the Quality Oversite Committee when making our school wide goals for the Quality Compensation (QComp) program.

Sharing the results

I plan to share the findings of my research with my principal and assistant principal, as well as kindergarten through second grade staff. I also plan to share these findings with the Language Arts Curriculum Committee to see if implementing Text Talk
(Beck & McKeown, 2005) is something we could do in all the kindergarten through second grade classrooms. Finally I will share my findings with our Quality Compensation (QComp) Quality Oversight Committee as our school wide goals will change from math to reading next year and I think vocabulary is the key piece to reaching the goal. My research and findings could also be helpful in gaining support and funding for this program in our school as I have already written and received a grant that was used to purchase the curriculum for the other first grade classroom.

Limitations

In this section I will look at what could be considered limitations of this research. The first limitation was the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R). I was only able to find the PPVT-R version of the test, even though there are three more editions since this one was published in 1981. Although the words used, method of scoring, and data has stayed mainly the same in these editions, the biggest changes have been to updating the pictures and web based applications. Even though this was a limitation, I feel like it still gave some positive data to show the growth my students made. Another limitation would be the lack of a diverse population. All participants in the research come from similar backgrounds leaving holes when looking at socioeconomics, family dynamics, and race. Finally, I did the research in my own class, which could bring in bias to the results. However, even though they were not included in the data, the other first grade class followed the same program with similar results, showing the data is reliable and not completely biased.
Future research

I think it would be interesting to track these students all the way through grade school to see if any of the vocabulary taught through this program in first grade stayed with them in their speaking and writing. Through interviews with teachers, student writing samples, and giving the Text Talk (Beck & McKeown, 2005) assessment each year, I could possibly continue to track this class and their vocabulary usage through their grade school years.

This research has reinforced and continues to spark my passion for language and language development. Another area of research that I did not include in this study but would be interested to dig deeper into is the role technology has played on vocabulary and language development. De Temple and Snow (2003) stated that if the child’s environment supports word learning and gives them the opportunity to engage in conversations with adults, it gives them a chance to use words they are in the process of acquiring meaning. Parents that are engaged in technology such as surfing the internet, social media, and texting are not engaging with their children. In many homes, meals in front of the TV replace family conversations. I am seeing younger and younger students using devices and filling up on screen time. I am very interested to see how this is ultimately effecting their vocabulary and language development. I do not see technology going away, nor do I think it should, but I do think that as teachers we need to be aware of the effects it is fostering in our students and find ways to address this issue.
Reflecting on *Text Talk*

This research has been an exciting and motivating process for me as an educator. I was very impressed with the *Text Talk* (Beck & McKeown, 2005) vocabulary curriculum and how fun and easy it was to use. *Text Talk* (Beck & McKeown, 2005) is a well thought out curriculum that pretty much comes with everything you need including; two copies of the read aloud, adhesive point of use instruction notes for each book, tally charts, and explicit lesson instructions. The selected read alouds are engaging, high quality literature (see Appendix C) using sophisticated vocabulary words that are taught with student-friendly definitions encouraging active thinking and talking. The only thing I changed about this curriculum is that I added my own tally tickets (see appendix F) and created a bulletin board that each week I would add pictures of the covers of the read alouds along with the vocabulary words found in that book. These additions kept the excitement going throughout the year by giving visual reminders of the words learned. It is rare to find a curriculum that is so easy and fun to use while yielding such positive results. I have always had a passion for words and this curriculum motivated me to get even more excited about teaching vocabulary and the wonder of words. I would highly recommend *Text Talk* (Beck & McKeown, 2005) as a wonderful supplement to any primary classroom.

Hope For The Future

Words are power. My hope for the future is to carry on the powerful findings of daily exposure to vocabulary through the *Text Talk* vocabulary curriculum for years to come. The powerful and positive results from this research are something I will share
with my colleagues in kindergarten and second grade in hopes they too will adopt this curriculum into their own classrooms. The curriculum was exciting for the students and fun to teach. I hope that this capstone inspires others to look more closely at vocabulary and encourages them to implement a curriculum that has daily exposure to words in a vocabulary-rich environment while providing direct instruction of words and word meanings.
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APPENDIX A

Sample of tiered vocabulary words taken from Reading Rockets, Choosing Words to Teach (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, n.d.)

Consider the following excerpt from the short story "My Father, the Entomologist" (Edwards, 2001, p. 5): "Oh, Bea, you look as lovely as a longhorn beetle lifting off for flight. And I must admit your antennae are adorable. Yes, you've metamorphosed into a splendid young lady."

Bea rolled her eyes and muttered, "My father, the entomologist." "I heard that, Bea. It's not nice to mumble. Unless you want to be called a … Mumble Bea!" Bea's father slapped his knee and hooted. Bea rolled her eyes a second time. The first day of fifth grade, and my father tells me I look like a longhorn beetle. Bea shuddered at the thought. She absolutely detested bugs.

Words from the story are divided into the following three categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier 1 words</th>
<th>Tier 2 words</th>
<th>Tier 3 words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longhorn beetle</td>
<td>Obsessed</td>
<td>Splendid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antennae</td>
<td>Detest</td>
<td>Shuddered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metamorphosed</td>
<td>Despise</td>
<td>Mumble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entomologist</td>
<td>Muttered</td>
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<td>Hurl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first column contains words that are important to the story but that can be dealt with very quickly.

The words in the next two columns have more general applications and are consistent with Tier Two words. The words in the second column — obsessed, detest, and despise — are most substantively related to the plot of the story, which is about a father who is obsessed with bugs and his daughter who detests and despises them. Detest and despise create a kind of "two-for" situation, in that they are very close synonyms that could be introduced together and used interchangeably.
APPENDIX B

Sophisticated words to use during classroom routines. Taken from Lane and Allen (2010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom supplies</th>
<th>Walking in line</th>
<th>Group time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accumulate</td>
<td>adjacent</td>
<td>articulate</td>
</tr>
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<td>approach</td>
<td>assemble</td>
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<td>disorderly</td>
<td>coherent</td>
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<td>efficiently</td>
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<td>linger</td>
<td>cooperate</td>
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<td>distribute</td>
<td>orderly</td>
<td>deliberate</td>
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<tr>
<td>dole</td>
<td>parallel</td>
<td>determine</td>
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<tr>
<td>gather</td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>disband</td>
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<tr>
<td>hoard</td>
<td>perpendicular</td>
<td>disperse</td>
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<tr>
<td>issue</td>
<td>proceed</td>
<td>elaborate</td>
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<tr>
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<td>procession</td>
<td>express</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>oblige</td>
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<td>queue</td>
<td>partake</td>
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<td>participate</td>
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<td>remain</td>
<td>portray</td>
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<td>swiftly</td>
<td>verbalize</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vicinity</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

Examples of *Text Talk* read alouds and vocabulary words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Read Aloud</th>
<th>Targeted vocabulary in book</th>
<th>Conceptual vocabulary in story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>It’s Mine</em>, Leo Lionni</td>
<td>Bickering</td>
<td>Harmony</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Defiantly</td>
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<td>Recognized</td>
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<td><em>Edward the Emu</em>, Sheena Knowles</td>
<td>Amusing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Snarled</td>
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<td><em>It Takes A Village</em>, Jane Cowen-Fletcher</td>
<td>Restless</td>
<td>Responsible</td>
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<td><em>Caps For Sale</em>, Esphyr Slobodkina</td>
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<td><em>Annie and the Wild Animals</em>, Jan Brett</td>
<td>Growls</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
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<td>Unexpected</td>
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<td><em>The Popcorn Dragon</em>, Jane Thayer</td>
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<td>Ability</td>
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<td>Forlorn</td>
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<td>Scorched</td>
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<td><em>Harry The Dirty Dog</em>, Gene Zion</td>
<td>Clever</td>
<td>Disguise</td>
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<td>Restore</td>
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<td>Furiously</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wonder</td>
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<td><em>The Gingerbread Man</em> Retold by Jim Aylesworth</td>
<td>Delicious</td>
<td>Boast</td>
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<td>Fancy</td>
<td>Devoured</td>
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<td>Rather</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Shaped</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX D

Parent Questionnaire

Who is filling out this survey?
Father  Mother  Grandmother  Grandfather  Guardian  Other

How would you rate your own school experience?
Very Negative  Negative  Average  Above Average  Exceptional

What is your highest level of education?
High School  Associate Degree  College Degree  Masters Degree  Doctorate

Who does the child live with?

If the child has siblings, what is the child’s birth order?

Circle the choice that indicates your opinion on each statement.
1. Do you use the public library?  YES  NO
2. Do you read for enjoyment?  YES  NO
3. Do you read magazines and newspapers?  YES  NO
4. Do you read to your child?  YES  NO
5. Does your child ever ask you what words mean?  YES  NO
6. Do you try to get your child to read at home?  YES  NO
7. Do you believe that your child does good work at school?  YES  NO

Please circle your answers to the questions below.
8. My child listens when someone tells stories.
   strongly agree  agree  undecided  disagree  strongly disagree

9. I enjoy reading at home.
   strongly agree  agree  undecided  disagree  strongly disagree

10. My child enjoys reading at school.
    strongly agree  agree  undecided  disagree  strongly disagree

11. How many children’s books do you have at home?
    1-7  8-14  15-21  22-35  36 or more
12. How often do you read to your child?
A. everyday  
B. a few times a week  
C. once a week  
D. a few times a month  
E. rarely, almost never

13. How often does your child “read” to you? (For example, this could be by showing you pictures and telling a story about them.)
A. everyday  
B. a few times a week  
C. once a week  
D. a few times a month  
E. rarely, almost never

14. How often do you play with or “teach” your child? This could be writing, counting, playing games, etc.
A. everyday  
B. a few times a week  
C. once a week  
D. a few times a month  
E. rarely, almost never

15. How often does your child visit the public library, a zoo, an aquarium, a museum, or some place with educational value?
A. everyday  
B. a few times a week  
C. once a week  
D. a few times a month  
E. rarely, almost never

16. How often does your family sit down for a meal together?
A. everyday  
B. a few times a week  
C. once a week  
D. a few times a month  
E. rarely, almost never

17. When your family eats together, who does the talking?
A. some talk by the entire family  
B. some talk, mostly by the adults  
C. child does most of the talking  
D. limited or no talking at the table  
E. family does not eat together
18. How often does your child watch television?
   A. everyday
   B. a few times a week
   C. once a week
   D. a few times a month
   E. rarely, almost never

19. On an average weekday, how many hours of television does your child watch?
   A. 4 or more hours
   B. 3 hours
   C. 2 hours
   D. 1 hour
   E. none

20. How often does your child play video games?
   A. everyday
   B. a few times a week
   C. once a week
   D. a few times a month
   E. rarely, almost never

21. On an average weekday, how much time does your child spend playing video games?
   A. 4 or more hours
   B. 3 hours
   C. 2 hours
   D. 1 hour
   E. none

22. How often does your child get a new book from the store or library?
   A. everyday
   B. a few days a week
   C. about once a week
   D. a few times a month
   E. rarely, almost never

23. Has your child ever used words that you feel are above his/her age?
    YES  NO
    If yes, please give some examples:

    Other comments.
## APPENDIX E

### Teacher Journal Template

**Date:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of field notes:</th>
<th>Observe and record everything</th>
<th>Observe and look for nothing</th>
<th>Looking for paradoxes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree of participation:</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Privileged</td>
<td>Passive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary words heard/seen:</th>
<th>Notes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Observations:**
I [ ] heard
[ ] read
[ ] said
[ ] wrote
the word

____________________
Name________________
Date_______________

I [ ] heard
[ ] read
[ ] said
[ ] wrote
the word

____________________
Name________________
Date_______________
APPENDIX G

Sample vocabulary checklist.

Class Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S= Word spoken
W= Word found in writing

Each week new words will be added to the checklist. Words will be counted on a monthly basis adding to previous weeks and new words learned.
This true/false assessment is a teacher created assessment of 50 words taken from the vocabulary curriculum *Text Talk*. The assessment will be given at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year to measure growth. The teacher will read aloud a sentence using a curriculum based vocabulary word in context. Students will indicate their understanding of the word by marking true or false on a corresponding piece of paper. The vocabulary words and sentences are as follows:

1. A brother and sister who never argue, **bicker** all the time.

2. If you were very, very thirsty, you would **desperately** need a glass of water.

3. If a boy **defiantly** answers his mother, he will happily obey her.

4. The girl put on a tiger mask and **mimicked** a giraffe.

5. Sam **detests** spinach so he asked for a second helping.

6. When the dog **snarled**, I pulled my hand away.

7. A **restless** toddler needs to get out of the stroller and walk.

8. It is fun to **wander** around an art museum and look at the art in no particular order.

9. A **vendor** yelled “hot dogs for sale, get your hot dogs here”

10. A child **swapped** two small race cars for a friends toy fire truck.

11. The cook was **delighted** to find there was no food in the cupboard.

12. The **trustworthy** boy walked his dog on time everyday.

13. Making noise while others are reading can be **disturbing** to them.

14. When you are **satisfied** you are unhappy about what you have.

15. A good way to **imitate** a duck is to make a mooing sound.

16. A plane can **soar** above the clouds.
17. You might want to wear a scarf on a **crisp** winter morning.

18. If you wanted to get to an appointment on time, you would be **eager** to get on the bus.

19. Screaming and yelling are good ways to show **patience**.

20. When dad says “**perhaps** we’ll ride bikes tomorrow” I know we will for sure ride bikes.

21. My sister set the seashells she **collected** on her dresser in a row.

22. When the baby looks **drowsy** his eyelids look heavy.

23. A sign of **panic** is yawning.

24. A girl would feel **reluctant** to hug her mother when she feels sad.

25. If you **boast** about something, you brag about it.

26. If you ate your lunch slowly and carefully, you could say you **devoured** it.

27. Many people find rocks a **delicious** snack.

28. A **grumpy** friend would tell funny jokes.

29. It would be **unexpected** to use paper and pencils in school.

30. A **tame** animal will sit on your lap.

31. The farmer **prodded** the pig into the pen with a stick.

32. I **grasped** my sister’s hand so she could run ahead and play alone.

33. Those two dogs are **companions** because they don’t get along.

34. Jason was **proud** that he got a good grade on the test.

35. It is my **routine** to read a book every day after school.
36. The shelf was so crowded that there was lots of room to put more books.

37. Breathing is something clever very few people can do.

38. A good disguise is a wig and a mustache.

39. The lazy turtle dashes from rock to rock.

40. It is appropriate to carry an umbrella on a rainy day.
41. Many people find a sunny summer day revolting.

42. A fussy eater might only like cheese and apples.

43. The girl convinced me she loved green beans when she took some and spit them out.

44. The daring ski racer jumped high in the air.

45. A bird singing is a frightening sound.

46. The determined boy never finished anything.

47. The tremendous storm had high winds, heavy rain, and lots of lightning.

48. A clumsy person is a smooth dancer.

49. A fire scorched the wall by the fireplace.

50. The bad cook was envious of his friend’s good cooking.