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RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMPREHENSION AND FLUENCY LEVELS WITHIN
READING AT A SECOND GRADE LEVEL

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

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St. Paul, Minnesota
July 2016

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

At the second grade level, comprehension is the most important reading goal students meet to enhance their levels of reading and deepen their understanding and connection with complex texts. What factors need to be implemented to ensure this reading objective is met? The focal area for my capstone action research project will be comprehension and fluency levels amongst a group of second graders. Comprehension and fluency act as the two big areas that encompass reading (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). With this idea, my action research question will be: *What is the effect of daily use of comprehension strategies, including inferencing, summarizing and visualizing, on fluency within a Spanish Immersion program?*

Researcher Background

I currently work in an elementary Spanish immersion school and have finished my third year of teaching second grade in this district. I am also currently completing my educational journey in receiving my license as a reading specialist. Within the second grade level, comprehension is one of the most important, if not the most important reading goal that we explore. The first two years of a student's elementary years are spent creating fluency while reading and gaining the knowledge and understanding of how to decode and read texts at their individual levels. In second grade, students learn that readers not only read texts but also understand what they are reading, depict the reason and the message of the author, make

predictions, explore new vocabulary and make connections to their personal lives, other similar texts and to the real world.

I have covered why comprehension is important to have as a focal area, but I also believe that it is important to discuss why it is a high interest area for myself and my passion behind this topic. I have always taken an interest in reading and the development behind it. I myself, struggled as a reader when I was younger and because of this, analyzing how emergent readers learn and develop is a passion for me and gives me a better idea on what I struggled with as a child. When a child struggles with reading and there is an absence in their proficiency, it not only affects their academic performance but can also associate with unemployment as an adult (Houtveen & Van de Grift, 2012). In this light, I have chosen to focus on fluency and comprehension levels because they are the most significant learning goals second graders achieve. Further, exploring the direct connection that fluency and comprehension might have will not only provide beneficial knowledge for my students but it will also provide me additional understandings for future experiences as a reading specialist.

Chapter Timeline

The following chapter consists of three areas which explain the practices and the relationship between comprehension and fluency levels. The first part includes the identification of my area of focus, my research question and the base foundation in early childhood for strategies and practices used for comprehension and fluency. The second portion of this chapter summarizes my rationale behind my purpose and why I have strategically chosen this topic and the impact it will have on my students. Finally, the third section presents the framework and

reading strategies to help students grow as readers and investigate the relationship between fluency and comprehension levels.

Early Childhood Literacy

As stated earlier, my area of focus will be finding the direct relationship between comprehension and fluency levels with a specified group of students. Despite their everyday usage, both fluency and comprehension are specific terms with detailed and refined definitions within educational circles. Fluency refers to the ability to read with expression, accuracy and speed. When students have met this goal, comprehension becomes attainable. Comprehension refers to the idea of understanding. A reader must acknowledge and have an understanding of the text. Without comprehension, readers are simply pronouncing words with no meaning behind them (Berglund & Johns, 2006). Starting with early childhood education, literacy is introduced and is held with utter importance for the developmental stages of young, emerging readers. Students become first exposed to reading while in their homes (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). They observe their parents or other adults reading, writing and enjoy having stories read to them. From that day on, children move on to become students who will begin their long journey of unfolding the complex development of reading. This learning can begin as early as toddlerhood where a child presents scribble like drawings or imitations of writing. These scribbles are the first stepping stones in expressing interest and understanding within the literary world and the aid in the cognitive development towards reading (Coates & Coates, 2016). The advantage of early exposure to print can advance a reader in a thriving manner that aids into the entry of formal reading. In return, this gives a greater ability and desire to read (Sparks, Patton & Murdoch, 2014).

The moment students become exposed to reading, the lifelong journey of becoming proficient readers begins. The main goal to reading is to create readers that will be able to decode and thoroughly comprehend texts by summarizing and making connections, along with providing inferences and predictions for what will happen next (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). As reading skills develop, they increase both the number and type of strategies they can use during reading experiences (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). The education and development of reading is an ongoing process that grows until students have entered adulthood, and even then they are continuing their skills with fluency and comprehension. It is vital that educators provide a rich and effective foundation for learning and prepare students for lifelong literacy skills.

Evidence-Based Practice

For my action research project, I will be using evidence-based best practices to facilitate an instructional framework that has a record of success for improving reading achievement.

Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006)

addressed the format of learning I would like to conduct within my action research project. The main idea behind this model of curriculum is to facilitate a learning environment that goes beyond the lesson at hand and provides the bigger picture of what educators want our students to know. As educators, we break the bigger idea into smaller pieces, almost as a ladder, in order to help direct students in the right direction and give them the opportunity to have an in-depth understanding of their learning and to promote inspiration for their own advancements. With this idea it is also important to understand the components each philosophy brings. Understanding by Design, also known as UbD, acts as the curriculum design model (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). UbD focuses on what we teach and how we are assessing. It develops the idea that we as

educators should not just teach the academic material, but simultaneously teach for student understanding. Differentiated Instruction (DI) is the second component in this dual philosophy. With DI, the main focus is whom, where and how we teach. This ensures that educators focus on the process to ensure effective learning for different learning needs and styles (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

Students need to be interested by the material and engaged by the manner in which it is taught or introduced. Choosing specific texts that allow students to make connections to their own lives or that satisfy their interests are stepping stones to bring them to the academic level needed to be successful with reading. These formats of instruction are models I will use to demonstrate best practices for comprehension and fluency.

Research Method & Approach

I will be using a mixed method research approach to find the relationship between reading comprehension and fluency level with a group of 17 second grade Spanish immersion students. In doing this, I will create and implement an individualized plan for each student, which will allow me to better understand individual learning styles as well as provide an environment that promotes small group discussion, one to one conferencing, and connecting text to their own personal lives to further increase the level of engagement and an overall love of reading.

One of the major focuses for second grade reading is to build on comprehension levels with various text. Reading comprehension affects students in all content areas in order to read directions, work independently and have effective comprehension for what they need to know. Fluency levels are assessed with a miscue analysis by FastBridge Learning at the start, middle

and end of the year. FastBridge Learning is an online learning assessment that allows educators to provide miscue analysis with FastBridge Learning resources to determine if students are at, below or above grade fluency levels. Data is collected within their online program and delivers ongoing data for students and educators (FastBridge Learning, n.d.). I would like to focus on fluency levels and see if it has a direct relationship with the various reading strategies that are used throughout the school year. Given the panoply of different teaching formats, it is important to understand how they work together. Finding specific and effective strategies benefit my teaching instruction and focus in on strategies that work well for students but still incorporates their differentiated learning needs.

According to the book *Best Practices in Literacy Instruction* (Gambrell & Morrow, 2015), using evidence-based best practice that promotes high rates of achievements has been found extremely effective. When educators use evidence-based practices, such as UbD and DI within our classrooms, we are delivering a solid platform of education that can be backed up with positive results of growth for fluency and comprehension. While conducting my action research project, I will be using various teaching components such as UbD and DI along with initial data that will demonstrate students levels of fluency and comprehension to address the objective, and create the differentiated instruction for each student.

Purpose of Action Research

Aiming my action research project at reading and strategies for higher literary understanding is important because of the impact the learner will have in every aspect of their education and will continue with them as they become active participants in society. Students need to have the skills to efficiently read information, analyze, and format thoughts. They need

to be able to decode various forms of text such as stories, informative texts, and mathematical and scientific formats of reading. If we do not provide the best educational techniques to enhance these skills in our students, it not will only affect them in reading but also in every other school subject as well as in everyday life (Gambrell & Morrow, 2015).

Colleagues are also able to benefit from this action research project by investigating what methods work best for students when improving both comprehension and fluency levels. As a second grade team overall, it is important that we all provide the same form of education that brings all students prepared for new assigned classes in third grade. My action research project will be able to answer questions in what curriculum we should incorporate within our reading and writing framework and what will be the most efficient for students to increase reading levels.

Rationale

My rationale for focusing on comprehension and fluency levels for my action research is to implement efficient, rich, and meaningful strategies that help develop both forms of reading. Finding effective and evidence-based measures of teaching and frameworks to promote best practices will aid in moving students to higher levels of reading and accurately measure their learning. My time frame consisted of the 2016-2017 school year that runs from September through the month of May. Starting off with research and initial growth tracking, I evaluated the literacy levels of each student and what growth areas are needed for the school year. The assessment I used to measure student fluency levels is the FastBridge Learning assessment. For my comprehension level benchmark assessment I utilized the Istation comprehension assessment that is facilitated once a month. In addition at-level activities are gathered for each student to practice throughout the remainder of the month.

Once I know where each student is academically, I can put in place text levels and facilitate student led frameworks to see the difference of student academic measures of both comprehension and fluency levels and other areas that would aid in finding the connection between these two reading areas of measure.

Summary

Focusing on best practices for comprehension and fluency will enhance my abilities as an educator to build a deeper understanding of what students need to enhance with literacy skills. My main goal is to determine the relationship between reading strategies and fluency levels. With the daily provision of comprehension strategies, such as inferencing, new vocabulary and synthesizing at a second grade target reading level, do fluency levels increase as well? Beneficial gains for my students will include a personalized plan to better understand how they learn and strategies that best fit their learning plan. Current curriculums would be improved and will also place a foundation of researched ideas that can help educators in the future when building reading and writing curriculums that focus on comprehension and fluency.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to take a closer look at what research is helpful to the action research question: *What is the effect of daily use of comprehension strategies, including inferencing, summarizing and visualizing, on fluency within a Spanish Immersion program?* Reading development is the number one determining factor for measuring a student's overall academic success. The two areas that enable a person to read successfully are fluency and comprehension levels (Ellery, 2009). It is crucial that students are able to reach a high level of comprehension when reading complex text and have the ability to read fluently to have high levels of understanding with various forms of text. Academic subjects such as math, science, social studies and every form of written communication all require effective reading skills to be successful. As educators, it is our job to prepare students for lifelong skills that produces thriving adults for the real world.

Now that we understand the importance and the necessity of strategies that increase levels of fluency and comprehension, it is also imperative to understand all the components that go into the process of these two areas and how we achieve them. Chapter two consists of reviewing the research that is needed to answer the action research question. Themes included in this section include, reading comprehension as a second language, leveled reading, fluency, comprehension, reading strategies, differentiated instruction and levels of reading achievement. Reading comprehension and reading fluency in a second language are important to include in

chapter two because it gives the reader an understanding of the necessary components in reading to become a successful reader and to understand the connections between reading in a first language and a second language. Leveled reading is included because every student needs text that are going to accommodate to their learning needs. A specific text that fits the literacy needs of one student might not be for another. Fluency is one of the two main components for reading and also directly related with the action research question. It is important for the reader to understand its importance in the process of learning how to read. One is able to attain comprehension by using the various forms of depicting text and illustrations for further understanding is how one is able to attain comprehension. Differentiated instruction is provided in the literature review because it will be a large portion of how lessons will be implemented. Differentiating instruction for each individual child so that each of their academic needs and styles of learning are met. Lastly, levels of reading achievements is included as well to explain students reading levels and the scale that they might fall under.

Each of the above described categories of the literature review and gives the reader insight into how educators measure students reading level, the important factors behind comprehension strategies and fluency levels, and why they are important factors for successful readers. Included in the following literature review is the importance of differentiated instruction and various reading strategies and how to attain high reading achievements within a group of second grade Spanish immersion students.

Reading Comprehension in a Second Language

The language environment for the action research project will take place in a Spanish immersion setting. When reviewing reading comprehension levels in general, the concept

remains the same in any language (Yopp & Stapleton, 2008). Once you have a core understanding of the meaning behind what it takes to comprehend a text and how to read with fluency, then those skills can be transferred from one language to another. Nassaji (2002), author of the journal article *Schema Theory and Knowledge-Based Processes in Second Language Reading Comprehension*, described the connection between reading comprehension in a second language and the use of schema to help in this process. The schema theory argues that comprehension is a cognitive process that includes areas such as inferencing, remembering and problem solving (Nassaji, 2002). When carrying this theory towards reading and comprehension the schema will be the same in either the first or second language. Both require the same concept of inferencing and connecting with past experiences to gain further understanding of a given text.

Families can help support Spanish immersion educators by practicing the same concepts in their own first language at home. This will enhance levels not only in a student's first language but will also increase in their second language, which in this case is in Spanish. Reading in a second language does not affect comprehension if a student is able to read fluently and is at a level where with the usage of schema, connections and other reading strategies to have a deepened understanding of the text. Leveled reading is another way in ensuring that each student is able to have a text that fits exactly within their literacy needs and that will also be a text that will challenge them to increase their levels of reading.

Leveled reading

Leveled reading is an important component to include in the literature review because it provides differentiated instructional material to students. Students are able to have texts that are within their academic needs and level of reading. Leveled reading refers to the systematic

placement for reading that determines the level of the students reading ability, such as the Lexile framework. The Lexile framework is an approach to readability that analyzes various texts and places them in a leveled system for reading (McKenna & Dougherty Stahl, 2009). There are several systematic placements for reading and unfortunately, they are not all consistent with one another. It is important to follow leveled reading, but to keep in mind that each leveled reading source varies within each framework. In order to understand where a child stands in comprehension and fluency levels of reading and where you are objectively would like them to end, you need a form of measurement to place them on a scale to accurately see explicit improvements needed.

Fountas and Pinnell is a curriculum framework that provides a structure that allows educators to see where a student is at within their leveled guided reading continuum (Pinnell & Fountas, I. C, 2007). In second grade, reading levels will be within the elementary levels A-N. My students will specifically use a Spanish translated short stories pulled from the Fountas and Pinnell reading continuum to demonstrate fluency levels (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009).

Making meaning will be another curriculum used throughout the school year to address measurement levels of comprehension and guide to help with reading instructions and final reading achievements (Developmental Studies Center, 2015). *Making Meaning* is a reading comprehension curriculum for kindergarten through sixth grade. Within this framework, it is built off research based best practices for comprehension and provides the support to enhance student growth (Developmental Studies Center, 2015).

Comprehension is one of the components for reading, the other component for reading is fluency. Both work together to provide fluent reading with understanding.

Fluency

Reading fluency is the ability to read continuously through a text with good momentum, phrasing, appropriate pausing, intonation and stress (Fountas & Pinnell, 2007). Fluency is a critical component of effective reading (Burns et al., 2011). It is vital that students develop the ability to read fluently to allow further comprehension and effectiveness when reading. Fluency is not a stage or level of reading. Fluency is accomplished when readers apply strategies to achieve fluent reading at developmentally appropriate leveled reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2007).

According to Rasinski, Blachowicz and Lems in *Fluency Instruction: Research-Based Best Practice* (2012), reading requires two skills: 1) The ability to identify and decode written word. 2) Making meaning out of the decoded written word. Emergent readers begin their journey with only one task, which is to understand that letters go together to make words and that words have meaning to construct a written language. Because this is such a large and strenuous task, readers are only able to focus on the simple mission of word recognition. Comprehension is unable to partake in this stage of a reader's journey (Rasinski, Blachowicz & Lems, 2012). When a reader has enough scaffolding and understanding of word recognition, it can become an easier process to decode and grasp the full meaning of the word or sentences.

When a reader masters the area of fluency, comprehension does not automatically follow. This is a completely separate concept that needs to be taught. Students need to understand that to comprehend a text, the constant reflection must be done (Applegate, Applegate & Modla, 2009).

When providing daily use of comprehension strategies, what will happen with fluency? Are these two areas tied together or do they require a separate set of instruction to achieve

mastery levels of both comprehension and fluency? We will next visit comprehension in more depth to attain a better understanding of how both fluency and comprehension work separately and how they could possibly work together.

Comprehension

The ability to comprehend complex texts is an ongoing process that takes years of practice in decoding words and utilizing various reading strategies to achieve in depth levels of comprehension. The definition of comprehension is the ability to construct meaning within a given text (Gambrell & Morrow, 2015). In this section, I will review how comprehension is achieved and what strategies must be put in place first before this ability is accomplished. As discussed previously, the first task that needs to be completed is the ability to understand that letters make words and words have meaning (Gambrell & Morrow, 2015). Researchers have shown that comprehension is the most important aspect of reading in order to construct meaning out of complex text and make personal connections for further comprehension (Lacina, 2011). An emergent reader needs to master the concept before they are able to achieve comprehension and eventually extensive fluency. *Best Practice in Literacy Instruction* argued that reading comprehension encompasses three reciprocal modes of communication: speaking/listening, reading/writing and viewing/representing. When educators assist in bringing students to these levels and to effectively use each compass to reach a full level of comprehension, their ability as a reader increases as well.

Comprehension can also be understood or depicted through a series of phases in early childhood. Comprehension begins the moment a child is exposed to language. The first connection is that oral sounds have words and meanings. Children gather their language

understanding with social interactions amongst their environment. Children enter their first form of literacy with the spoken language (Gambrell & Morrow, 2015). The next phase comes with understanding that written letters are incorporated to language and that you can speak, read and write in a language. I taught preschool ages children ranging from three-five years of age for seven years. My entire literacy dedication was introducing letters and the associated sounds. Students need to master this concept before they are able to write or read simple texts. From there the trek to decoding words take place.

My focus group for this action research will be amongst a 2nd grade group of students. When entering second grade, at target level students should be able to effectively decode words and sentences and can read simplistic texts. The focus area for second grade is to increase their reading fluency along with their comprehension levels so that they are able to make predictions, summarize with detail and connect specific texts with personal life situations and other related texts (Fountas & Pinnell, 2007).

Reading Strategies

Reading strategies refers to the various instructional approaches to guide children in achieving successful comprehension and fluency. In order to reach any level of reading and comprehension, students need to utilize strategies that decode words and help make meaning of a given text. Our main objective with students and literacy is to help create self regulated readers. In order to do this we need to put in place certain strategies to help students decode and make meaning to their text. The strategies that I will be focusing on with my action research project are inferencing, using vocabulary strategies, visualizing and summarizing. Inferencing refers to going beyond a literal meaning of a text and to begin to analyze a more in depth meaning that the

author is trying to indicate (Fountas & Pinnell, 2007). McKoon and Ratcliff (1992) referred to inferencing as anything that is not explicitly stated in a text. Students need the necessary tools to make deepened meaning in what they are reading. Creating predictions and making connections would be examples of inferring a certain text.

Within this study, it is essential to consider inferencing when discussing student learning as they process what they are reading in order to make meaning. If this is achieved, my goal is to be able to link natural increases in fluency from focusing on strategies such as inferencing and to be able to grasp new knowledge in order to have a better idea of what they will be reading next within a text.

When we speak of new vocabulary in a literary sense, we refer to the ability to make meaning of new words using inferencing as a means to gather a correct definition of a word (Ellery, 2009). In order to determine the meaning of a word, readers must analyze the structure. Implementing techniques that support the connections between the structural aspect and the basic definition helped students in understanding the word (Ellery, 2009). Ellery, in *Creating Strategic Readers*, gave a well written and detailed list of questions, prompts and statements that can help students analyze new vocabulary. This list includes asking students to look at the many areas of how to dissect a word or phrase by looking at the prefix or suffix of a word, using illustrations for further guidance, taking the word apart and reading it out with every syllable and then blending it back together, re-reading the sentence and looking for clues to give you a definition and using latin roots to determine the definition (Ellery, 2009).

Summarizing is another important element in creating a reader that is able to comprehend complex texts. When providing written summaries, students are forced to reflect off what was

read and recall the important information versus the unimportant details to add to their summary (Garner, 1984). Students are able to verbally recall what they have read and what information was obtained, or they are able to journal about their summary.

Visualizing is one of the concepts that I focused on and is also included in our districts' Making Meaning curriculum. Throughout this curriculum we spend several weeks with each concept to ensure students are getting a deepened understanding of how to implement these strategies while reading. Visualizing is the process of creating a story line in their mind that lines with what was just read. When readers are able to visualize what the book was describing, they are able to remember and understand the text that they reading (Developmental Studies Center, 2015).

Differentiated Instruction

When guiding students to their reading level objective and leveled achievement, instructional differentiation between each pupil is imperative. Each student enters information and grasps learning in diverse formats. This section will review the range of approaches to individualizing reading strategies for students.

When instructing students with explicit objectives and lifelong lessons that will create effective readers with the ability to analyze complex text and to read with high fluency levels, you must be able to differentiate instruction. Tomlinson and McTighe (2006) designed a high functioning concept to achieve instruction at an individualized format. Within this high functioning concept, Tomlinson and McTighe use Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design as formats that become integrated into one idea of how to guide

students for success. In order to truly understand the combined concepts of instruction, I will break up the two and introduce them separately.

First, I will begin with differentiated instruction. This concept is based on the idea that each pupil learns in individual ways (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). It is crucial that we as educators understand this and implement individualized lessons for each student within our classroom. It is vital that you combine differentiated instruction with powerful and strong curriculum based outline to ensure powerful knowledge that reaches each student individually (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). Differentiated instruction should be executed in a way that does not change the material of what is being taught but rather change the format of how it is being taught. The strengths of each student should be portrayed when planning a lesson (Aldridge, 2010). When a student qualifies for Response to Intervention (RtI), differentiated instruction is crucial for a student's success. Students need individualized instruction in order for growth within each unique student (O'Meara, 2011).

A separate component that aids with Understanding by Design is differentiated instruction. The main principle behind this instructional structure is to allow showing students the bigger picture of what we want achieved and then breaking down the parts like a step ladder so that the student is able to get to the bigger idea in smaller and more reachable steps (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). When utilizing Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design, we create a solid foundation for heightened learning and further opportunities by approaching the education backwards and in return giving students the outcome to better understand the steps need to achieve the intended goal. Students have an active role in their learning when they know what needs to be done and what they need to get there.

Another form of differentiated instruction is providing daily small group opportunities and one on one conferencing with students (Gambrell & Morrow, 2015). When implementing small groups and conferencing, you are further able to identify individual learning needs and forms of learning (Gambrell & Morrow, 2015). Connecting with students on a daily basis will not only aid in their learning, but will also allow you to form a better relationship with your student that will permit you to learn more about their interests and motivational keys to engage in reading (Gambrell & Morrow, 2015). When interest and genuine motivation is placed in reading, students are willing and able to increase reading levels and utilize various strategies to achieve fluency and comprehension (Serravallo, 2010).

In summary, implementing the concepts of differentiated instruction is not only beneficial for the educator because we are able to know each student in a way that connects us with a better relationship with each individual, but it also benefits the student in working through concepts at their own pace and at their individual needs for learning.

Levels of Reading Achievement

Levels of reading achievement indicates where students are within their reading abilities. We may have low reading achievements and students may also be within higher reading achievements. Each pupil learns and reaches developmental milestones at different paces. One reading level for one student may not be appropriate for another student. It is vital to understand which reading level each student is on along with knowing the difference between the levels to assess each student appropriately (Carver, 2000). In addition educators need to comprehend that different techniques and approaches are necessary depending on a student's specific reading achievement. When discussing leveled reading and the resources that will be used, those same

resources for acknowledging where students are will be the same assessments to receive the results of reading achievements and how much growth was achieved throughout the school year.

Conclusion

Chapter two reviewed the various research and resources that aid in the process of answering the question: *What is the effect of daily use of comprehension strategies, including inferencing, summarizing and visualizing, on fluency within a Spanish Immersion program?* In order to achieve the answer to my action research question, it is imperative to understand the influence that comprehension and fluency have with one another and what the student is taking in when reading complex texts. Through various forms of assessment and interaction, a thorough understanding of the complexities of reading will be observed. Through this, students, educators and colleagues will benefit with creating a higher functioning reader.

Chapter three reviews the numerous quantitative methods that take place within the action research project. These methods are the assessment tools that measure initial student levels of reading and their progress throughout the school year which gave me the results necessary to determine the relationship between comprehension and fluency levels. Before a researcher begins their journey to addressing their action research question and area of focus, they must review and analyze the various methods and philosophies that will be applied.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The main goal of chapter three is to provide an explanation of the methods used during the school year in order to conduct my action research project and current research question:

What is the effect of daily use of comprehension strategies, including inferencing, summarizing and visualizing, on fluency within a Spanish Immersion program?

Research Design

My research design consists using quantitative research theories (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative approach will be used in forms of reading surveys to provide initial background information about each student and their attitude towards their reading ability, general interest and an end of the year goal of where they would like to see themselves as a reader. Receiving this information will aid in my research project to conduct differentiated instruction for each pupil. A second form of the quantitative approach will be done in the form of assessments. In order to see progress, I conducted assessments with my students to view their growth results and compare those results with fluency levels to see if they did indeed have a direct relationship. Assessments that were used came from the *Making Meaning* curriculum that is a rubric based assessment of meeting levels of comprehension, prediction and also gives the reader an opportunity to share their favorite part and talk about the characters (Developmental Studies Center, 2015). This assessment allowed me to see the level of comprehension each student had and could directly see their fluency levels when student read a section of their selected text.

Within this particular action research question of comprehension and fluency levels, it is crucial that the quantitative approach is used to get a better sense of the reader and to analyze data that can conclude the connection of fluency and comprehension

Research Paradigm

When conducting and researching the question of the relationship between comprehension strategies and fluency levels, I turned towards the numerous areas of investigation that one can use while conducting research and try to see which one best fits my question. One way of conducting a research is through the theory of the post-positivist world view of research. Within this theory, you use quantitative paradigms to ensure that I am getting the data needed to understand the connection between fluency and comprehension levels (Mills, 2014).

Just as there numerous ways to conduct a research, there are also multiple ways to teach. Differentiated instruction and understanding by design are one of many paths to use while educating that support my pragmatic world view in educating students (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design work together to aid in conducting the research question and within the everyday learning experiences I have with my students. The idea behind differentiated instruction is to follow the student and provide individualized ways of learning that mold along with the way the best learn. Understanding by Design is meant to be a way of thinking and educating that goes beyond the traditional ways of teaching. With Understanding by Design, the bigger picture or desired results are stated at the beginning and introducing the desired results in a way that each student is able to understand.

From there the educator provides the baseline steps to improve and ultimately get the desired results. It is necessary for these two concepts of instruction to work together to provide an individualized education plan and in a way that gives students the big picture at the start so they know what their ending goal looks like (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

Setting

The setting for addressing my action research question was within a 2nd grade Spanish immersion environment, where I am employed. I work in an elementary school that provides both English and Spanish Immersion settings starting from kindergarten to fifth grade. My district is located in a suburb and serves ten communities within the surrounding area. Our district consists of preschool and community education programs, six elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school as well as an online schooling program for high school level students. In total, our district serves approximately 9,600 students. At the second grade level, we have three Spanish classrooms that hold 24 to 26 students. Each classroom has their main teacher along with additional paras if necessary for certain students in need of one on one instruction.

Participants

Participants in my study consisted of 17 students from my classroom during the school year 2016-2017. Within this group, 14 out of 17 students (82%) were White, 2 out of 17 students (12%) were Hispanic and 1 out of 17 students (.07%) were Pacific Islander

In addition, 82% of students live within the district and 17% of students live outside of the district. Most students that live outside of the district drive longer distances to arrive in the morning and depart to their after school location.

To further review my students and their individual needs, initial assessments were given at the start of the school year to measure students overall reading and more specifically, fluency and comprehension levels. Students were divided within three tiers. Tier 1 would place the student at grade level or beyond, tier 2 would place the student slightly behind grade level and tier 3 would place the student extremely below grade level and would require intensive intervention.

The overall results from the district assessment provided me with the data that revealed that 64% of students were in tier 1, 12% of students were in tier 2 and 24% of students were in tier 3.

From there I took a closer look the area that I would be specifically investigating. The comprehension results of the district assessment demonstrated that that over half of the group was in tier 1, but both tier 2 and tier 3 had 16% of students in each area. Fluency levels were measured a bit differently. FastBridge Fluency assessments measure words correct per minute read. Depending on the percentile of the student, if a student is below the 25 percentile they would be considered tier 3, if a student is above 25 percentile they are at grade level. If a student is above the 75 percentile, they are considered above grade level. When a student is in the 25 percentile or below, they are considered tier 3 and qualify for RtI. From 25 percentile-30 percentile would be considered tier 2 and anything above 30 percentile would be considered at grade level. Once a student is above the 75 percentile, they are considered above grade level. Below are the fall results of both the comprehension and fluency levels in Table 1.

Table 1

Comprehension and FastBridge Baseline Assessment, Fall 2016

Comprehension		Fluency	
<u>Tier 1</u>	68%	<u>0-19 percentile</u>	20%
<u>Tier 2</u>	16%	<u>20-29 percentile</u>	12%
<u>Tier 3</u>	16%	<u>30-84 percentile</u>	52%
		<u>85 percentile & Above</u>	16%

Along with the comprehension and fluency assessments students were given an assessment that would reflect their levels of vocabulary and how they are able to decode unfamiliar texts. This would also be one of the areas that would go towards comprehension and may or may not have an impact in fluency levels as well. Out of 17 students, 16 students were under the beginning level and 1 student was under the developing level.

Procedures

Procedures I used throughout the school year vary and have many components. In order to reach each student individually, various forms of instruction must be put in place to create diversity.

Large group. Large group instruction serves the purpose to give students the overall objective and provides them with the bigger picture (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). When we give students the bigger picture, we can then break down the steps to get there and create a more realistic and reachable goal for students. Large group was provided on a daily basis and would consist between 5-10 minutes. Students also use this time to have discussions about certain

reading strategies and would think, talk and share their thoughts and comprehension (Developmental Studies Center, 2015). I used the curriculum guideline from *Making Meaning*. Large group is done three out days out of the week, generally Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Each week or couple of weeks, I introduce a new concept strategy that students can incorporate into their readings to help increase comprehension levels. The first lesson of large group is used to give the main objective of the strategy and stated what students would be able to do by the end of the specific unit. The second and third day of large group is intended to think out loud and show students how this is achieved while using various texts. Students are given the initial tools and examples and then are able to discuss with assigned reading partners what they have learned and how they can apply each strategy while reading. This was further extended into individual reading to where students use their own choices of reading to further explore each strategy.

Small groups. Small groups were conducted on a weekly basis to students. When providing small group instruction I was able to use formative assessments, form flexible reading groups upon reading levels, provide differentiated instruction and provide enhanced tier 1-3 instruction (Serravallo, 2010). When choosing small groups, I chose students who were similar in fluency levels and had similar growth areas for comprehension skills. Groups would range from 3-6 students per group. Higher leveled readers would participate in larger groups. Each week, we would focus on specific reading abilities, such as synthesizing, inferencing, finding new vocabulary and reflection of various contexts of texts.

Small groups also set up students to apply and practice new reading strategies on their own during independent reading time. I gave them the tools they needed in order for them to apply those concepts within their own reading of interest.

Methods

Procedures give me the opportunity to differentiate my instruction in various forms. Students are able to receive different areas of education that align to their specific format of learning. Methods are used to collect information on where students are at in the fall and provide me with a clear understanding of their progress and allow me to collect and analyze data in order to conclude an answer of the relationship between comprehension and fluency.

Istation comprehension assessment. Istation Comprehension is an online interactive assessment that measures their levels of five areas (Istation, 2017). These areas include fluency, comprehension, phonemic & phonological awareness, vocabulary and written communication. In addition, Istation includes a growth chart that reviews their overall progress from all five areas that are assessed. The overall reading progress monitoring demonstrates the student in general and how they are progressing with their reading. It takes all five areas into consideration and whether or not the student is decreasing in his or her ability or if they are increasing.

Students are able to take a twenty minute assessment once a month to measure their growth. From there they complete weekly activities that align with their academic reading needs. Educators are able to easily monitor students while they are being assessed and have immediate results available to direct students learning depending on their levels of literacy within the five areas.

FastBridge Fluency Assessment. The FastBridge Fluency Assessment is what our district uses to measure levels of fluency (FastBridge Learning, n.d.). This assessment is done electronically and just like Istation gives users, families and educators a clear understanding of where each student is and a view of the the overall results for the class. FastBridge Fluency is

one of the assessments we use to determine if a student is above grade levels, at grade level or in need of RtI. If a student is below the 25th percentile and their and their Istation results also reflect lower results, students are then provided with RtI 2-3 times a week. Students are assessed three times throughout the school year. The first assessment is done in September, the second one is done in December and the third is done in the month of May. In doing this we are able to provide a continuous observation process that helps track the progress of each student and their academic needs.

Making Meaning conferencing rubric based assessment. One on one conferencing is a weekly check in with every pupil. Each week, twenty minutes are set aside to touch base with each student and see how individual instruction could be provided. Our district's curriculum for reading and comprehension skills is *Making Meaning* (Developmental Studies Center, 2015). Every educator knows that we only have so much time during the day to fit all form of academic instruction which requires some fine tuning. One on one conferencing was a challenge to fit in the schedule but was essential in order to provide individual instruction and student connection. Our reading time is a total of 60 minutes which include large group instruction, peer discussion, and individual reading. Individual reading is approximately scheduled for the last 20 minutes. During individual reading, I divide my time up throughout the week to include small group as well as one on one conferencing. One on one conferencing allows me to use Making Meanings Conferencing rubric assessment to further investigate if comprehension skills are being met and what we can work on next. The Making Meaning conference assessment form can be found in Appendix A. Assessments are provided within a questionnaire that gives students the room to think and apply their thoughts with real stories that they are currently reading. As we go along,

students give me example of their thoughts, what will happen next in their book and an overall summary of what they learned. Students also show and read me a favorite part of their book.

Within the framework of the *Making Meaning* curriculum, student and teacher conferencing provides an individual discussion to communicate strengths, growth areas, and to provide formative assessments to further advance each student with specific reading goals.

Vocabulary assessment. In addition to the Istation analysis that also evaluates vocabulary as one of its areas of evaluation, a second assessment that directly focuses on the vocabulary development and growth in investigating unfamiliar vocabulary is implemented. The vocabulary assessment can be found in Appendix B. The assessment was put together by my Professional Learning Committee (PLC) for our grade level year learning goal. This assessment focuses on various word parts as well as the concepts of polysemic words synonyms and antonyms. The assessment is initially given in September to provide a baseline of students levels of knowledge within this given topic. After receiving a clear understanding of what previous knowledge students had with each of these areas, large/small group and individual conferencing of each topic were given. On-going discussions and activities surrounding the vocabulary word parts and concepts help keep these areas fresh with students and helps levels of comprehension and fluency. The assessment is given a second time in December and a final third time in May.

One activity that students do throughout the school year is keeping post-its in their leveled reading bins and every time they found a word part or discovered they had just used a comprehension reading strategy, they write what they just discovered and stick it to that specific page that they are reading. By providing opportunities such as these, students are able to participate in an on-going process to increase vocabulary, comprehension and fluency levels.

Data Analysis

Analyzing information was done through the collected assessments throughout the year. Addressing the question of the relationship between comprehension and fluency levels within a Spanish immersion program, it is imperative to ensure the collection of various assessments and conferences that will be used to collect the results of the action research question of the direct correlation between fluency and comprehension levels.

When gathering all information and analyzing the data, each initial assessment was analyzed to form a baseline of students comprehension, vocabulary and fluency levels. From there, I created a differentiated instructional plan for each student. As the school year progresses, I will continue to build on each student and gradually gather results from one one conferencing, monthly assessment results from the Istation Comprehension assessment and through each assessment from the vocabulary and fluency assessments.

looking at the Istation results, I isolated the area of their overall growth in reading since it will indicate as a whole if they are progressing or regressing as reader. I will also isolate the area of comprehension and vocabulary to receive a better understanding of each student's foundational levels when entering the second grade year. From there, I will move towards the fluency assessment, review the baseline information for each student to mark where each student is at and the progress they will demonstrate throughout the school year. The biggest two areas that are critical are the fluency and comprehension. Ultimately, these will demonstrate the direct correlation amongst the two reading areas.

The vocabulary assessment and the Making Meaning rubric assessments will assist the areas of comprehension. Focusing on vocabulary strategies to investigate unfamiliar vocabulary

will expand their reading ability and understanding of the word. Conferencing with students and using the comprehension rubric will provide an in depth understanding of how students are reading, what connections they are making and how they are do them.

With each of these areas of assessment, they will all begin with the same form of instruction. Starting with large group and providing goals in where students will be and what they will learn, to small groups and conferencing to further implement learning goals and differentiated instruction. Reading strategies such as investigating new vocabulary, inferring, summarizing and visualizing will all be areas that will be covered and will help students through their assessments and provide further knowledge in achieving higher levels of reading.

Ethics

When conducting the action research project, I took various measures to protect the identity of each participant and their academic information. At the beginning of the study, permission consent forms were sent home to provide information of the research and what areas were being used for my investigation. Further information explained that participants would remain anonymous and any data would remain confidential. In addition to the consent forms, I also received permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) from the Hamline University to ensure I was meeting all requirements when conducting my action research project.

Summary

Chapter three reviewed the methods that will be used in perusing the answer the action research question: *What is the effect of daily use of comprehension strategies, including inferencing, summarizing and visualizing, on fluency within a Spanish Immersion*

program? Addressing the surveys, assessments, methods and tools are essential in understanding the process of which was done to investigate the specific research question.

In chapter four, results will be provided from each assessment tool that was used throughout the school year to determine the relationship between reading comprehension and fluency. Information is presented in the form of tables indicating where students were at in the fall and separately showing where students ended in the spring. Each assessment will have its own table along with a summary of what was found for results. In chapter five, I will analyze the results, address the answer to the stated action research question and discuss further steps in teaching with the specific discovered data from this action research project in addressing the connections between comprehension and fluency levels.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

The main objective of this study was to investigate the relationships between comprehension and fluency levels and if they indeed had a direct connection to one another. This focus area was based off my original question. *What is the effect of daily use of comprehension strategies, including inferencing, summarizing and visualizing, on fluency within a Spanish Immersion program?* The setting for my action research question took place in my second grade classroom from September of 2016 through May of 2017.

Within this chapter, I review the data tools used to attain quantitative statistics, review the results from every area and address the connections that were noted between fluency and comprehension levels of reading from my second grade classroom. The results include data from 17 of my students.

Results

Within chapter three, my main focus was to provide a summary of the methods and assessments that would be used throughout the action research project in order to attain tangible data that would indicate if there was indeed a direct connection with reading and fluency levels. As reviewed before, the assessments used throughout the school year were Istation, FastBridge Learning, Making Meaning conferencing rubrics and vocabulary learning strategies assessments.

Istation assessment. My first step in investigating my action research question was to analyze where students were initially in the fall. As a reminder, Istation is an electronic assessment that is a user friendly program and done on a monthly basis. The five areas that are

assessed are comprehension, fluency, written communication, phonemic/phonological awareness and vocabulary. In addition to these five areas, Istation also provides information regarding their overall reading. For my action research project, I focused on three areas within this assessment. Overall reading, comprehension and fluency are the three areas I will focus on for results. Below provides the district's fall and spring norms amongst these three areas to compare with the scores of my participants (See Table 2 & 3).

Table 2

Istation District Norms for Overall Reading, Comprehension and Vocabulary in the Fall

	Overall Reading	Comprehension	Vocabulary
Tier 1	860 & Above	218 & Above	211 & Above
Tier 2	822-860	205-218	202-211
Tier 3	822 & Below	205 & Below	202 & Below

Table 3

Istation District Norms for Overall Reading, Comprehension and Vocabulary in the Spring

	Overall Reading	Comprehension	Vocabulary
Tier 1	924 & Above	238 & Above	226 & Above
Tier 2	822-860	214-238	211-226
Tier 3	822 & Below	214 & Below	211 & Below

Overall reading. The overall reading takes into account all five areas of and measures their overall growth amongst the five. For example, if a student showed slightly lower scores in one area of reading but measures high in others. Their overall level of reading would still

demonstrate an increase. The average score for their overall reading was 873 out of 980. This gave me a good indication of where each student was at, how I could direct my lessons, and assessment tools towards each individual student. Once I got an idea of how their overall reading was, I looked specifically into areas of comprehension and vocabulary, since these were all areas that were being addressed throughout the school year.

When reviewing the results of their overall reading in the month of May, I noticed a large increase between the fall into the spring. The average score now was at 945 out of 980.

Table 4

Istation Overall Reading Assessment Student Results from Fall .

	Fall Results in Overall Reading	Spring Results in Overall Reading
Tier 1	64% of students	71% of students
Tier 2	12% of students	25% of students
Tier 3	24% of students	4% of students

The results indicated that many students moved at least one tier level and even though there is a higher percentage in the tier 2 from the Spring versus the Fall, it shows that the increase in percentage is from the students that no longer were in tier 3 and no longer needed extensive measures of RtI.

Comprehension. Comprehension was assessed through the Istation electronic assessment. Within Istation, five areas are evaluated. These areas are comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, phonemic/phonological awareness and written communication. This assessment is done at the start of every month and once results are gathered and students levels in these five

areas are known, individualized lessons are formatted for their academic needs to help with growth areas. When looking into comprehension at the start of the school year, the average score was 231 out of 280. When looking at the percentages of tiered groups and where students were in the fall and then again in the spring, Table 5 demonstrates the changes in percentages for each of the tiered groups.

Table 5

Istation Comprehension Assessment Results

	Fall Results in Comprehension	Spring Results in Comprehension
Tier 1	68% of students	87% of students
Tier 2	16% of students	13% of students
Tier 3	16% of students	0% of students

Students took their last assessment in May. I found an increase in score as well as students moving tiers and improving their comprehension levels. In the spring, students average scores increased from 231 to 265 out of 280. I also noted that no students were longer in the tier 3 group. When reviewing the percentages, there were no students that remained in tier 3 and the percentage of students in tier 1 had increased significantly.

Vocabulary. Students scores in the fall demonstrated that the average score for the area of vocabulary was 202 out of 230. I measured the vocabulary levels since one of the big comprehension strategies was to focus on making meaning to new vocabulary and the different strategies to do so. In the fall students measured the following when looking at the three tier

groups. Table 6 demonstrates the percentages of the different tiers in the fall and as well as in the spring.

Table 6

Istation Vocabulary Assessment Results

	Fall Results in Vocabulary	Spring Results in Vocabulary
Tier 1	28% of students	67% of students
Tier 2	36% of students	36% of students
Tier 3	36% of students	29% of students

At the start of the school year, there were more students in tier 2 and 3 than there were in tier 1.

After reviewing results from the month of May, I noted that it switched and now there were more students in tier 1 than in tier 2 or 3.

The levels of vocabulary increased by 39% for tier 1 and levels from tier 2 and tier 3 decreased. Tier 2 had a 32% difference and tier 3 had a 7% decrease.

FastBridge Fluency Assessment. In September, I gave my students the base assessment to establish literacy needs and facilitate learning plans for each student. There are four areas that a student might fall under. Students that fall below the 25 percentile range qualify for RtI. These areas are the following:

- 0-19.9 Percentile range
- 20-29.9 Percentile range
- 30-84.9 Percentile range
- 85 & above Percentile range

The 30-84.9 percentile range is considered at the 2nd grade level. Scoring anything above that would be above grade level. No students assessed outside the screening window.

Reviewing my results from the fall revealed that 20% of students were in the 0-19.9 percentile range, 12% of students were in the 20-29.9 percentile range, 52% of students were in the 30-84.9 percentile range and 16% of students were in the 85 & above percentile range and above. Since the Fall assessment, students were then given the assessment again in the Winter and in the Spring. Results demonstrated that as the year progressed, the below grade level areas (0-19.9 percentile range & 20-29.9 percentile range) decreased and the grade level and above areas (30-84.9 percentile range & 85 percentile range and above) increased. Table 7 demonstrates the positive growth.

Table 7

FastBridge Fluency Assessment Results

	Fall	Winter	Spring
0-19.9 percentile	20% of 17 students	20% of 17 students	4% of 17 students
20-29.9 percentile	12% of 17 students	8% of 17 students	4% of 17 students
30-84.9 percentile	52% of 17 students	48% of 17 students	64% of 17 students
85 percentile & above	16% of 17 students	24% of 17 students	28% of 17 students

Making Meaning one-on-one conferencing. Within the outline of the Making Meaning curriculum there are one-on-one conference assessments that are conducted with each student. This is a checklist rubric to ensure students are meeting second grade reading levels. The Making Meaning one-on-one Conferencing can be found in Appendix A. Each concept that is taught

throughout the school year is also included with a conference. I chose to focus on three of these concepts to explore and investigate if these concepts connect directly with fluency levels. These concepts were visualizing, inferencing and summarizing. I took my information from bi-weekly conferencing and the gathered anecdotal notes that were a part of a rubric checklist and formatted a quantitative version with measurable data. I was able to do this by adding the amount of areas that were checked off the comprehension conference worksheet out of the total amount possible. This allowed me to see where students were most succeeding and where students seemed to have the same difficulty when comprehending their text. Each reading concept that I used received its own conference sheet. Table 8 provides scores of the three areas I chose to investigate specifically. Each reading concept is a separate rubric sheet that was given to each participant. Students were able to score up to ten points.

Table 8

Making Meaning One-on-one Conference Checklist Results from three Separate Checklists including Visualizing, Inferencing and Summarizing

Score	Visualizing	Inferencing	Summarizing
<u>0/10</u>	0 students	1 student	0 students
<u>1/10</u>	0 students	0 students	0 students
<u>2/10</u>	1 student	0 students	0 students
<u>3/10</u>	1 student	0 students	1 student
<u>4/10</u>	0 students	1 student	0 students
<u>5/10</u>	1 student	1 student	0 students
<u>6/10</u>	0 students	0 students	0 students
<u>7/10</u>	0 students	2 students	0 students
<u>8/10</u>	4 students	3 students	5 students
<u>9/10</u>	6 students	6 students	5 students
<u>10/10</u>	4 students	3 students	6 students
	Total students=17	Total students=17	Total students=17

We started the school year with the concept of visualizing what you are reading to ensure you understand what is going on with your text. When reviewing the conference sheets to investigate if the comprehension was there, 10 out of 17 students did not meet the ability to investigate unfamiliar text. Students who missed investigating unfamiliar words, also were only able to give a brief summary with little to no detail or they were not able to express any understanding of the text. From this observation. As we moved onto inferencing and

summarizing more students were able to investigate their unfamiliar vocabulary and began to use more of the reading concepts that had been reviewed in class. As a result, by the end of the school year more students were increasing in scores.

Vocabulary assessment. The vocabulary assessment that was put together by our Professional Learning Committee (PLC) assess and indicates areas needed for growth in certain word parts as well as the concepts of polysemic words synonyms and antonyms. The vocabulary assessment can be found in Appendix B. Students were given the assessment in the fall and based on the results from the fall evaluation, we were able to implement lessons to teach students the necessary items to have the ability to decode unfamiliar text.

Students were then given assessments in December and again in May. At the start of the school year, students scored very low. When grading the assessments, students were either under Beginning, Developing or Secure. Below are three figures representing students scores in the fall, winter and spring. The majority of the students fall under beginning. From this group, 16 students scored at a beginning level and 1 student scored at the developing level.

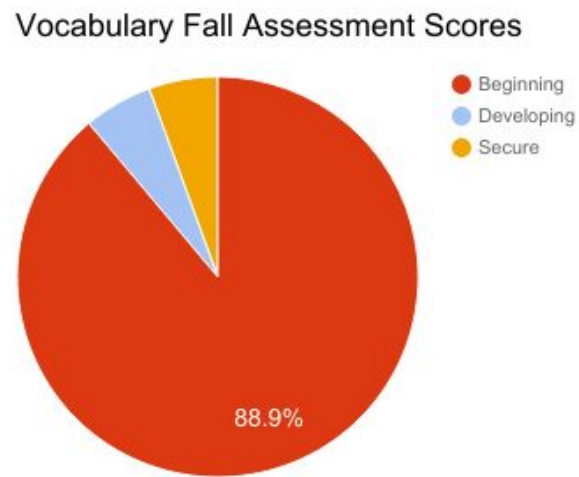


Figure 1. Vocabulary Fall Assessment Scores

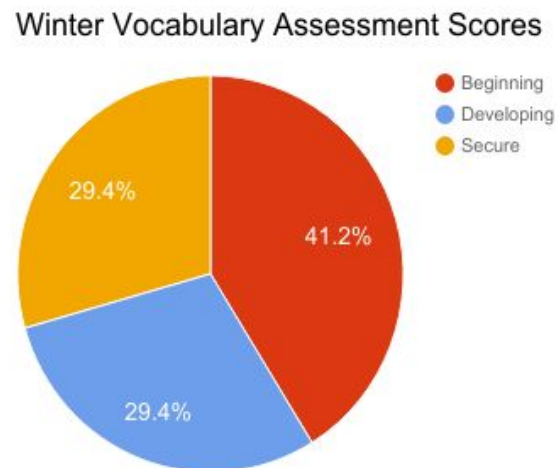


Figure 2. Winter Vocabulary Assessment Scores

Vocabulary Spring Assessment Scores

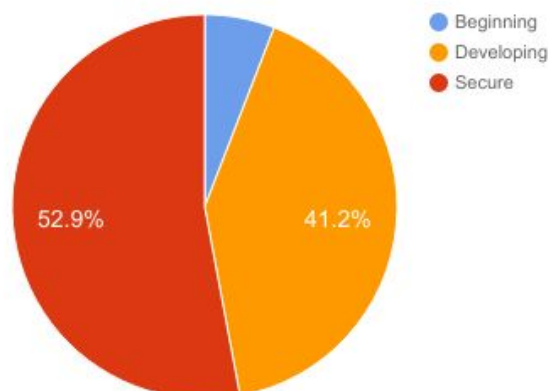


Figure 3. Spring Vocabulary Assessment Scores

In December, 7 students were in beginning, 5 students were in developing and 5 students in secure. By May, 1 student scored at the beginning level, 7 students scored at the developing level and 9 students were at the secure level. The final result demonstrated that 16 out of 17 students were able to move up an area. Including the area of vocabulary was necessary in aiding to the growth of comprehension and seeing if this would also increase the fluency levels amongst students.

Chapter Summary

In my research, I focused on the direct relationship between comprehension and fluency levels in reading. I reviewed all areas of assessments, how they were delivered and the direct results from students. Up until second grade, the emphasis in successful reading is to read texts with speed, accuracy and expression. Once that is met, students learn that there is more to reading than just precision. In chapter two, I mention this from the book *Fluency Strategies and*

Assessments (Berglund & Jones, 2006). Berglund and Jones described the definition of fluent readers that include the three components that were mentioned and the importance of fluency to readers. Students who are able to read fluently will have increased chances to understand complex texts. Not so much energy is focused on the word but instead placed in the comprehension and building elaborate summarizing thoughts about what they are reading (Berglund & Johns, 2006).

Chapter two also places a great amount of time to the works of Tracey and Morrow (2012) with their description of the main ideas behind reading. The main goal is to create a reader that will not only be able to decode but will additionally use reading strategies to understand and provide feedback about the text and predictions. As a student grows the number of reading assessment increases. This research gives us the ability to shed light on the importance of reading strategies to further comprehension and in addition, naturally increases their levels of fluency.

When putting in place several reading strategies such as inferencing, visualizing, summarizing and the investigation of unfamiliar texts, students are required to take further time re-reading texts to gather main ideas, look at the structural aspects of a word and therefore become more likely to recognize the word or phrase while reading in the future

In chapter five, I continue to analyze results and place additional emphasis on what I learned through the process and how I will communicate my results with others.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Introduction

In chapter four, I described the outcome of the year long assessments and the associated data that would help answer the question: *What is the effect of daily use of comprehension strategies, including inferencing, summarizing and visualizing, on fluency within a Spanish Immersion program?*

Chapter five consists of various areas that analyze the results from chapter four. A review of my action research journey gives reflection on my initial reason for gearing my focus into literacy and my review throughout each previous chapter. From there I review my major learnings through this investigation and answers to my initial research question. Implications and limitations are also discussed to shed light to the importance of who was affected and things that could be done differently in the future with the same research question. Recommendations of how this information can be used for future research and my overall growth are all areas that make up chapter five.

Action Research Review

I initially became very interested in gearing my action research topic towards some form of literacy. From there I knew that within my second grade classroom, comprehension is by far the biggest area that we focus on throughout the school year. In our district, we test fluency and comprehension levels separately, but many of our literacy lessons intertwine both areas of reading. I was curious to see the connection between the two areas and if I focused solely on comprehension what would the connections to fluency be?

Chapter one gave me the chance to share with readers a bit about my background and the reasons behind why I chose the focal area of comprehension and fluency levels. Chapter two summarized the important areas that play a crucial role in literacy and the instructional framework behind reading and the comprehension and fluency levels. Throughout the school year, I found myself going back and reviewing the works of various areas in chapter two. In order for me to investigate accurate results and determine the relationship of fluency and comprehension levels, I needed to ensure that all important areas of research and implications were being used. The biggest areas that were used to determine my results were within reading strategies and differentiated instruction. With these two areas, I was able to instruct lessons that would help readers use strategies to further understand what was within their text. I provided differentiated instruction to each student according to their levels of reading and their styles of learning.

Major Learnings

The foundation of this research was based off my action research question: *What is the effect of daily use of comprehension strategies, including inferencing, summarizing and visualizing, on fluency within a Spanish Immersion program?* From this question I was able to review the literature needed to conduct the research, understand what assessments and materials needed to be implemented and also guided the process of how I would work with each student to discover the relationships between comprehension and fluency.

Comprehension and fluency relationships. When conducting this research, I discovered that comprehension and fluency have a very direct and strong connection with one another. Even when solely focusing on comprehension, fluency naturally increases. Reading strategies such as

inferencing, summarizing and visualizing helped build the level of comprehension as well as the comprehension Istation and vocabulary assessments.. From there, fluency was assessed and the results demonstrated that even when isolating comprehension, fluency levels increased with students. In the fall, students were assessed and the results demonstrated that 20% of students fell under tier 3, 12% of students fell under tier 2, 52% of students fell under tier 1 and 16% of students scored above grade level. After all assessments and forms of instruction were implemented throughout the school year, the percentages shifted towards tier 1 and above grade level. Instead of 20% for tier 1 and 12% for tier 2, at the end of spring, 4% fell under tier 1 and 4% for tier 2. As for the tier 1 level and students that scored above grade level, the spring levels resulted in 64% in tier 1 instead of 52% and 28% of students were above grade level versus 16% of students.

Direct effects from comprehension to fluency levels. In addition to the discovery of a relationship between fluency and comprehension, there were other areas that were included in my overall learnings from this specific action research plan.

First, I was very interested in finding that comprehension has more of a direct effect on fluency than fluency has on comprehension. This means that if we were to solely focus on fluency strategies, students would still be missing the pivotal component that is necessary to become a high leveled reader that is able to comprehend complex texts. Even if comprehension levels would increase, they would only increase by so much. Students entering second grade have received two years of solely focusing on fluency. When entering second grade and having several years of fluency, their comprehension levels were still low. While conducting this research, comprehension was the only focus area. The results indicated that fluency and

comprehension levels increased and more students were moving up tiers and less students were in tier 3 or needing RtI.

I also discovered that by focusing more on comprehension than fluency, students overall became better readers. In the fall, 32% of students fell into tier 2 and 3 and 68 % were in tier 1 or were above grade level. In the spring, only 8% remained in tier 2 and 3 and 92% of students were at tier 1 or above grade level. Overtime, students independently started using their strategies without even realizing they were doing so and independently investigated unfamiliar words and successfully discovered the meaning. Just like a new driver that needs to remember all the components of driving, in time it becomes natural and something they do not have to think about.

Comprehension and vocabulary. Another important discovery was the importance of vocabulary when initially looking at the fall assessments and seeing the areas of growth in their Istation assessments. Out of the five areas that were evaluated, many students scored poorly in vocabulary. Due to this discovery my PLC formulated an assessment that would assess many areas of how to investigate unfamiliar words. From there several lessons were done throughout the school year to teach students how to find the Latin root of a word and compare it to other similar meanings, how to use synonyms and antonyms to help find a meaning, discovering the use of prefixes, cognates and polysemics. I was surprised to see how much of an influence vocabulary had with the levels of comprehension. This also made me realize the importance of including vocabulary throughout the school year to further increase the levels reading for my students.

Transferring comprehension strategies from one language to another. My last learning from this action research project is related with reading in different languages and the reading strategies that are needed for each one. When conducting this research and implementing various reading strategies it is evident that comprehension places a large emphasis in learning how to read. I knew that comprehension strategies are able to transfer from one language to another, but I was very intrigued with how immediate the transfer of skills was. It was one thing to know this information and another to experience it with your students. When reading in a different language, the comprehension reading strategies would stay the same. For example, inferencing, summarizing and visualizing requires you to think about what you have read, make predictions and visualize what is happening in the book. These strategies do not include depicting the written language but rather to reflect. These strategies are able to transfer from one language to another because you use reflection strategies. Within chapter two, I reviewed reading in a second language and connected the comprehension strategies stay the same for either language. What I did not realize is how much emphasis is placed on comprehension. All of these strategies can be implemented in either language. Starting in third grade, the students in our Spanish immersion program begin to phase in reading in English. Students may need support in decoding and understanding all the grammar rules in English, but they would be able to transfer their knowledge of reading strategies and comprehension to the English language as well.

Connection to Literature Review

Chapter two is designed to provide literature that would connect with the initial question of the relationships between comprehension and fluency. Within the literature review several components were included to analyze the various areas of reading in a Spanish immersion

program and what forms of instruction would be used throughout the school year. All areas in chapter two had a large impact with the action research question: *What is the effect of daily use of comprehension strategies, including inferencing, summarizing and visualizing, on fluency within a Spanish Immersion program?*

My major learnings in chapter five support the areas in chapter two and in addition, provide further findings with the relationships of comprehension and fluency for the future. Fountas and Pinnell (2007) defined reading strategies as various instructional approaches to guide children in achieving successful levels of comprehension and fluency. In order to attain high levels of reading, students need to exercise strategies to help decode words and also to make meaning of a given text. As a result from this action research project, my findings support the need to implement comprehension strategies once a student is at a certain fluency level to increase not only comprehension but fluency as well. Not only do the results support the importance of reading strategies, but it also allows us to understand the immediate effect comprehension has with fluency and how both can be increased when placing more weight on comprehension.

Differentiated Instruction also supported the results from researching comprehension and fluency levels. Each student learns differently and by using a differentiated approach, I was able to see where each student was at, what learning growth needed to be addressed, how they interpret their text and ultimately provide them support with reading strategies (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). The importance of comprehension strategies helps me effectively teach each student according to their own needs and provide a more effective differentiated instruction.

Finally, this research supports the area of comprehension and its crucialness in learning how to become a high leveled reader. The definition of comprehension is the ability to construct meaning within a given text (Gambrell & Morrow, 2015). One is unable to understand complex texts without the ability to comprehend and read with consistent accuracy. When emphasizing in comprehension, you increase in fluency levels that in return give you accuracy and the ability to depict texts for further understanding.

My journey in finding the relationships between comprehension and fluency allowed me to provide crucial data to the educational world and demonstrate the powerfulness of using comprehension strategies to increase the reader's ability as a whole.

Implications

When conducting this research, the major learning that were discovered not only benefit myself, but will also support students, other educators and the Spanish Immersion program with reading transitions in third grade when students move from 100% of their time learning in Spanish to 60% Spanish and 40% English. By discovering that comprehension and fluency in reading are directly related, students are able to spend more time with comprehension and vocabulary investigation once they have built a base of fluency and not have to spend time separately on both areas of reading. When spending more time with comprehension, their fluency levels would naturally increase. This creates a more effective way of teaching students how to become high leveled reader.

This research also supports educators in supporting their students for finding a more effective way to teach on how to reach high levels of reading. Knowing the information towards comprehension, we are now able to understand that most of our focus once entering second grade

is to be within comprehension and vocabulary investigation. My Professional Learning Committee (PLC) also is able to grow when researching the connection between comprehension and vocabulary. We were able to use the data to further increase the level of education we give our students for becoming a high leveled reader.

Lastly, our Spanish Immersion program also can be further supported with the given results of comprehension and fluency levels. The K-8 Spanish Immersion Department Chair Representative works within our building, and would make an excellent source to share the results from my action research project. As I have stated before, students once entering third grade start to shift from solely Spanish to integrating English in reading. We now know that comprehension plays a big role in reading and while using comprehension reading strategies and vocabulary investigation, fluency levels also increase. Students are able to transfer their knowledge from reading in Spanish to English to help give them the foundation for understanding written text. This supports the program and their philosophy of Spanish Immersion and also implementing English reading starting at the third grade.

Limitations

I found two limitations within this research. First, because I station is new to the district, there were some areas that needed to be corrected. The initial assessment that was done at the beginning of September and was supposed to provide the initial baseline for students had to be done a second time because students were being tested at first grade level. When initially looking at the results, I was surprised to see that the majority of my students were in tier 1, some in tier 2 and no one was in tier 2. After realizing the level at which they were being tested, students

re-took the assessment at a second grade level and I used the second assessment results for my initial baseline.

Secondly, this research study did not give me the opportunity to work with fluency levels and their relationship with comprehension. As of right now, we know that there is a direct relationship with the two and if you solely focus on comprehension, fluency increases as well. What would happen if we solely focused on fluency, what would comprehension levels do?

Recommendation for Future Research

As mentioned earlier, one of my limitations was the lack of an opportunity to further research fluency and its connections to comprehension or other reading components. My recommendation for future research would be to isolate fluency and compare growth in comprehension and vocabulary knowledge and research the direct connections they will have. I would also recommend providing this research with a younger age group that would still be in the fluency range as an emergent reader and see how much comprehension a student is able to achieve with only being taught fluency reading strategies.

Lastly, I would also recommend a research that would be geared with the same students moving into third grade where they have to take their comprehension reading strategies and implement them in English when they start to expose the second language in reading. It would be interesting to see the outcome when transferring these strategies from one language to another.

Overall Growth

I am truly surprised by the many more connections I have made from what I thought I would initially have made. As an educator, my level of literacy knowledge and the development of a student within this certain area has highly increased. I have not only increased my levels of

knowledge, but I have also been able to view the developmental process of reading in a different paradigm. I am now able to break apart reading into strategic areas that have different educational needs in order to reach a high level of reading.

The biggest two areas that have increased my overall understanding of reading and the connection of comprehension and fluency levels are from the chapter two, literature review and the actual analysis of results. Within chapter two, I got the perspective of numerous authors and was able to take the main question and break it down into the various themes that all aid in the discoverment of the results between reading and fluency levels. When analyzing the initial base assessments and final results, I was able to understand the connections between comprehension and fluency, but I was also able to explore the areas of vocabulary investigation and the relationship vocabulary has with both fluency and comprehension.

The knowledge that I have collected over the past year, will help me share this information with colleagues, peers and administrative leaders to ensure awareness of the connection between comprehension and fluency levels.

Conclusion

When initially posing the question: *What is the effect of daily use of comprehension strategies, including inferencing, summarizing and visualizing, on fluency within a Spanish Immersion program?* I wanted to know more about how to guide my students effectively towards higher levels of reading and the comprehension with complex texts. Throughout the year, I was more aware of the process that is necessary to acquire accurate results and the many components that need to be intertwined with the research question.

When looking at the two areas of reading that are comprehension and fluency, there is a large connection amongst the two areas. When focusing on comprehension levels, fluency levels increase naturally. Visualizing, inferencing and summarizing are three areas that aid in this result. Another large piece to comprehension that also increases the levels of fluency is vocabulary. Vocabulary investigation not only increases comprehension but it also increases fluency. By conducting this action research project, I was able to dissect the many components that go into overall reading and explore areas that can be done effectively to allow other areas of reading to increase as well. This not only helps myself, but also provides knowledge to students and other educational colleagues.

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APPENDIX A

Making Meaning One-on-one Conferencing Rubric

IDR Conference Notes

Nombre: _____ Fecha: _____

Título del libro: _____ Nivel: _____ Sistema de nivelado: _____

1) Inicio de la conferencia	Notas
Pregunte: ¿Sobre qué tema trata tu libro? ¿Acerca de qué has leído hasta ahora? ¿El estudiante es capaz de responder la pregunta acerca del tema del texto?	
2) Escuche al estudiante leyendo en voz alta. El estudiante: ¿Presta atención al significado? ¿Lee con fluidez? ¿Hace pausas y vuelve a leer si tiene dificultades? ¿Lee la mayoría de las palabras con exactitud? ¿Trata de buscarle el sentido al vocabulario que no le es familiar? Pregunte: ¿Sobre qué trata la parte que acabas de leer? ¿El estudiante es capaz de decir sobre que trata el pasaje que ha leído?	
3) Conversar acerca del texto Haga las preguntas de comprensión ¿El estudiante comprende el texto?	
4) Converse acerca del nivel del texto Pregunte: ¿Piensas que este libro está a tu nivel de lectura (ni demasiado fácil o excesivamente difícil)? ¿Por qué piensas esto? ¿El estudiante es capaz de determinar si él comprende el texto? ¿Este texto está al nivel adecuado para el estudiante?	
Próximos pasos:	

APPENDIX B**Vocabulary assessment**

Nombre: _____

Prueba de vocabulario

Fecha: _____

El diminusaurio

1. Lee la página 5. ¿Cuál es el significado de la palabra '*para*' en esta página?
 - a. Dejar de hacer algo
 - b. Indica dirección
 - c. Parar de mover
 - d. En la opinión de alguien

2. Lee la página 6. ¿Cuál sería un sinónimo para *diminuto*?
 - a. Grande
 - b. Criatura
 - c. Dinosaurio
 - d. pequeño

3. Lee la página 6. ¿Cuál es el significado de la palabra '*como*' en esta página?
 - a. Comer hojas
 - b. Dar un ejemplo

- c. Sirve para preguntar
 - d. Mostrar una diferencia
4. Lee la página 8. Pensando en el prefijo '*super*', ¿qué piensas que significa '*le superdolería*'?
- a. No le duele nada
 - b. Le duele muchísimo
 - c. Le duele un poquito
 - d. Tiene poderes de superhéroe
5. Lee la página 9, Si un triceratops tiene tres cuernos, ¿Cuántos motores tiene un trimotor?
- a. Cuatro (4)
 - b. Cinco (5)
 - c. Trece (13)
 - d. Tres (3)
6. Lee la página 9. ¿Cuál sería otra palabra que se puede usar en vez de '*pesadamente*'?
- a. Rápidamente
 - b. de puntillas
 - c. Con fuerza
 - d. Lentamente

7. Lee la página 10, pensando en el significado de las palabras ‘calor’ y ‘calentar’, ¿qué significa la palabra latina ‘*calere*’?
- a. Sudadoso
 - b. Caluroso
 - c. Empezar
 - d. Enfriar
8. Lee la página 11. ¿Qué significa la palabra ‘*glaciares*’?
- a. Grandes montañas de hielo
 - b. Rastras de las montañas
 - c. Teropodos
 - d. El tiempo frío
9. Lee la página 11. ¿Cuál palabra tiene un cognado en inglés?
- a. Rastras
 - b. Escapar
 - c. Hielo
 - d. Caminar
10. Lee la página 11. ¿Qué palabra pertenece al conjunto de palabras ‘*lejos y alejar*’?
- a. Alejándose

- b. Caliente
- c. Bajando
- d. Empezara

11. Lee la página 13. ¿Cuál de las siguientes palabras significa lo mismo en inglés y en español?

- a. Lugar
- b. Primero
- c. Idea
- d. Grande

12. Lee las páginas 13-14. Usando la ilustración, ¿Qué es un cascarón?

- a. Un dinosaurio
- b. La parte exterior dura de una nuez
- c. Un copo de nieve
- d. Una montaña cubierta con nieve

13. Lee la página 15. ¿Cuál de las siguientes palabras no pertenece al conjunto?

- a. Frío
- b. Enfriar
- c. Resfriado
- d. Esperar

14. Lee la página 15. ¿Cuál sería un antónimo para 'se derritiera'?

a. Se desapareciera

b. Se congelara

c. De la tierra

d. Se calentara

