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The Effects of Trained Teachers' Integration of Dialogic Reading Discourse on Hispanic English Language Learners' Literacy Skills in Kindergarten

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THE EFFECTS OF TRAINED TEACHERS' INTEGRATION OF DIALOGIC READING DISCOURSE ON HISPANIC ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' LITERACY SKILLS IN KINDERGARTEN

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Isela S. Rodriguez

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To: Dean Delia C. Garcia
College of Education

This dissertation, written by Isela S. Rodriguez and entitled The Effects of Trained Teachers' Integration of Dialogic Reading Discourse on Hispanic English Language Learners' Literacy Skills in Kindergarten, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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DEDICATION

Without my family's support, this feat could not have been attained. Thank you for your unwavering love and patience. At times when I had self-doubts, you all believed in me, encouraged me, and nurtured the fact that this endeavor would be accomplished including Mary, my cousin who kept me company at the library every weekend. Thank you to my Mother who in her elderly years undertook more than she should have so that I could dedicate myself to studying. Thanks to my husband who often had to forego my company so that I would be able to study and continue on my learning path. Furthermore, to all my family members who were present when I started this journey with me and are no longer here, particularly my Dad and Uncle who would both be so very proud of me. To my nieces and nephews, may my drive to complete this work, be an example for you that one's education is never-ending as you pursue lofty dreams, learning, and opportunities.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

THE EFFECTS OF TRAINED TEACHERS' INTEGRATION OF DIALOGIC READING DISCOURSE ON HISPANIC ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' LITERACY SKILLS IN KINDERGARTEN

by

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Professor Laura Dinehart, Major Professor

This quasi-experimental Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) study explored whether the vocabulary and reading comprehension mean scores of Hispanic Kindergarten ELs whose teachers were trained to utilize Dialogic Reading (DR) discourse were higher than the mean scores of Hispanic ELs in kindergarten whose teachers were not trained to utilize DR discourse strategies. Sixty-three self-identified Hispanic, English Language Kindergarten students and four teachers participated in the study. The teachers were randomly assigned to either the experimental group (DR trained) or control group by drawing names from a hat. Student assignment to experimental versus comparison group was based on the teacher's assignment to either the experimental or comparison group. Thirty-one were assigned to the control group and 32 to the experimental group.

The teachers were instructed to read the story to a group of six students (maximum) at a time, utilizing the DR discourse strategies they had been trained to implement. Subjects were read a story each week during the 8-week duration of the

study. Teachers in the experimental group collaboratively selected 10 words each week from the *Read Together Talk Together (RTTT)* instructional stories that were utilized for vocabulary instruction.

A test of homogeneity was conducted to evaluate whether the variance among the dependent variables was the same across the groups. An Analyses of Covariance (ANCOVA) was applied to analyze students' vocabulary and comprehension mean scores in the experimental group and the comparison group. The results of the study demonstrated a significant increase in the vocabulary and reading comprehension mean scores for the students whose teachers had been trained in DR discourse strategies. When comparing the two groups, the results revealed a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$).

In conclusion, this study was conducted to explore how DR discourse may be an effective technique to teach literacy skills. The findings of this study showed that vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension of Hispanic ELs were positively affected by the teachers' inclusion of dialogue during storybook reading. Its outcomes accentuated the need for teachers to provide assistance to ELs as they develop vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension skills.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Learning to read is a complex process that children need to master at a young age in order to function in a literate world. It is a process that begins at infancy and is supported during the early growth stages at home by families and adult care-givers prior to entering formal schooling in kindergarten (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998; Storch & Whitehurst, 2001; Teale & Sulzby 1986; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998, 2002). English Learners (ELs) make up the largest population who struggle with overall literacy skills in English, more specifically they struggle with vocabulary and comprehension (Hickman, Pollard-Durodola, & Vaughn, 2004). In the case of ELs whose home language is not English, numerous studies have been conducted that demonstrate different instructional strategies that support these learners' English literacy skills acquisition. For example, it has been found that a major element in fostering the development of ELs' vocabulary and overall literacy skills is for adults to read aloud picture books to the children where the adult prompted the child into dialogue about the book (Collins, 2004; Valdez-Menchaca & Whitehurst, 1992).

Studies have evidenced that storybook reading is directly correlated to the children's development of language and literacy skills (Arnold, Lonigan, Whitehurst, & Epstein, 1994; Crain-Thorenson & Dale, 1999; Senechal & Lefevre, 2002; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). It has been found that posing open-ended questions during storybook readings evidenced gains in children's language development (Valdez-Menchaca & Whitehurst, 1992). Thus, for this study, Dialogic Reading (DR) techniques as presented

by Whitehurst and Lonigan (1992) was investigated to determine its effect on young children's vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension.

Dialogic Reading interventions entail an adult reading to the child, then having the child engage in dialogue about the book through five specific prompting techniques – completion, recall, open-ended, wh (what, who, when, where, and why), and distancing questioning (CROWD; Whitehurst, Falco et al. 1988). During the reading experience with the child, the teacher (or adult) prompts the child through different types of questioning techniques:

- Completion – child completes the blanks at the end of the sentence orally prompted by an adult.
- Recall: adult asks questions about the book the child has read.
- Open-ended: adult asks the child to tell what is happening in a picture.
- Wh-: adult asks "wh" questions about the pictures in the books (i.e. what, where, who, when, why).
- Distancing: adult relates pictures and works in the book to children's interpretation of what he or she is seeing and understanding.

Children-parent interactions at home can also be linked to young children's school readiness (Bus, 2002; Bus, van IJzendoorn,, & Pellegrini, 1995). However, often it is difficult for these learners' parents to be involved in the development of their child's learning as they face many challenges themselves including time constraints, economic barriers, and language differences between home and school. Thus, ELs often commence

formal learning experiences with language, vocabulary, and literacy skills differences in English, which ultimately lead to increased risk of having reading difficulties in their later academic years (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998).

During the last two decades, the number of United States residents aged five years and older who speak a language other than English at home has more than doubled (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). A study of the Office of English Language Acquisition (2002) reported that an estimated 4.5 million children enter U.S. schools with limited proficiency in reading and writing in English. The number of ELs in this country has doubled, yet, it remains that only 20% of those children are ready to learn literacy skills in English when they first start Kindergarten. Thus, ELs are among the largest group of learners who struggle with literacy skills from the onset of their academic trajectory in English (Hickman et al., 2004).

In reviewing how all young children learn and sustain long-term reading skills, Hart and Risely's, *Meaningful Differences in Everyday Experience of Young American Children* (1995*),* highlights that children should enter kindergarten with strong reading skills. However, they also indicate that the number of children beginning kindergarten with adequate literacy and language skills is decreasing. Research suggests that this decrease can be attributed to the minimal amount of time parents and children engage in oral language exchanges or shared reading experiences today.

Experiences associated with learning to read extend beyond the classroom boundaries. Low income children have quality, culturally-relevant and valid experiences that are significant in their development, yet they are not experiences with language that lead to enhanced vocabulary learning in their early years (Hart & Risely, 1995). Evidence

pinpoints that a learner's level of vocabulary knowledge has been a predictor of both fluency and reading comprehension (Hickman et al., 2004).

While reading difficulties cannot be solely attributed to children from low-income status or children from homes where English is not the dominant language, the fact remains that children who have less exposure to reading experiences often lag behind their peers in reading achievement and their deficiencies in literacy are difficult to overcome. For instance, Juel (1988) and Whitehurst and Lonigan, (2001) indicated that those children who were poor readers at the end of first grade experienced reading difficulties and remained poor readers at the end of fourth grade. Exposing children to rich, verbal interactions at home can be conducive to the acquisition of early vocabulary skills in school (Blom-Hoffman, O'Neil-Priozzi, Volpe, Cutting, & Bissinger, 2006; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001). If exposure is not taking place for ELs in the home environment, then teachers need to redirect their instruction so that these learners have literacy engagement opportunities that build literacy skills such as vocabulary knowledge, language command, and comprehension skills (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998; Sherman-Brewer, 2004; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

The National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000a) took into account the National Reading Council (NRC) summary and research reviews to identify deficient literacy areas for at risk children. Some literacy themes that emerged included the need for identifying and implementing interventions for all children at risk to prevent reading failure. Also, it emphasized the importance of using literature in the instruction of reading to develop children's comprehension skills. Although the importance of the role of teachers in the instruction of reading was established, these reports, did not address how

teachers can implement specific strategies such as read-aloud in order to improve vocabulary development and reading comprehension. Additionally, these reports were deficient in addressing which instructional practices were aligned with improving ELs' literacy skills at a young age.

Most of the research reviewed surrounding the improvement of ELs literacy skills development focused on young learners who were registered in federally funded pre-school programs. For example, Early Reading First called for the instruction of language, literacy and pre-reading skills to develop low-income, preschool-age children is literacy skills. Thus, Head Start programs evolved and the instruction of literacy skills to young children registered in these programs commenced (Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006). Another example was the William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Programs also referred to as Even Start, focused on improving the educational opportunities of the nation's low-income families through the integration of childhood education, adult literacy education, and parenting education. Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) along with Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001) make an appeal for inquiries to investigate instructional strategies that are from scientifically-based reading research to assist young children in school to obtain knowledge and skills they need to experience optimal reading development beyond pre-school and kindergarten.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the U.S. Department of Education Workshop (2000b) convened and concluded all children can be taught to read. A call was made for researchers to identify issues surrounding social, cultural, and environmental factors that children bring to the learning experience so that interventions can be designed in order to impact children's literacy learning and that can be utilized as

effective practices in preparing young children for long-term successful reading. The available research conducted in kindergarten classrooms indicated that increased book reading provided beneficial learning opportunities for young learners' literacy development (Dickinson, De Temple, Hirschler, & Smith, 1992).

According to Dickinson et al. (1992), book reading experiences during a child's young years support literacy learning as a mature reader for several reasons: (a) it allows for focus on units of language – phonemes, words, syntax; (b) it acquaints child with book language; (c) it exposes children to meaning found in books; (d) it enhances vocabulary development; (e) it models complex, text, structure; (f) it acquaints children with knowledge about print; and (g) it introduces children to dialoguing about books that they would read in school.

Inquiries surrounding the effects of storybook reading on young children continue to emphasize book reading experiences as an important element in the development of oral language, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension. Vocabulary knowledge remains a crucial component for understanding what is read to children who are at risk for reading difficulties and to young Hispanic kindergarten children who are learning to read in English as a second language. Past research findings demonstrated that children learn new vocabulary from storybook reading and those children with some vocabulary knowledge make gains in vocabulary knowledge (Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Senechal, 1997). Additionally, the research findings indicated the following: (a) children who received instructive guides by adults had developed stronger language abilities; (b) children who were given explanations about word meanings during the reading session made gains in vocabulary knowledge; and (c) children who dialogued and answered

questions about targeted words during the shared reading sessions made greater gains in comprehending and producing new vocabulary words (Elley, 1989; Senechal, 1997). As a result, language and vocabulary development, reading context, writing, shared reading experiences have become integral to the formal schooling curriculum of primary grade students in the development of literacy skills. Shared reading experiences and picture storybook reading experiences where children are given opportunities to interact and to engage in dialogue is paramount in developing Hispanic ELs' vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Thus, this study was directed at exploring this topic.

Problem Statement

Learning to read is a complex phenomenon which is impacted by a young child's socio-cultural environment, abilities, skills, and cognitive processes. Thus, young ELs' limited vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension when they first begin formal schooling have become the foci of instructional personnel (Hickman et al., 2004; Robbins & Ehri, 1994). Teachers refer to learning theories and seek solutions from research studies in the integration of reading instructional strategies that best assist them in improving ELs literacy skill performance in English. To further compound the problem, during recent years, the effects of *No Child Left Behind* (2001*)* federal statutes of having children perform on standardized reading assessments by the time they are 8-years old and the pressures applied to instructors to be accountable for these young children's reading skills acquisition has prompted challenges and issues for early childhood instructors. Poor readers in the third grade who are retained remain in classes with children younger than they are. This factor generates additional social problems such as the development of low self-esteem, intimidation tactics brought on by older children,

and loss of motivation to learn. Besides the stigma and social pressures, grade retention of these learners is a predictor that in their later academic years, they will drop out of high school and most likely not attend college (Tillman, Guo, & Harris, 2006).

In the case of ELs, demonstrating reading proficiency in standardized assessments in all primary grade levels is expected to be at the same level as that of their native English-speaking peers. This feat is not likely because ELs bring different home practices, cultural experiences and levels of language to the reading experience (Au, 1993). In the area of literacy skills, performance levels due to at-risk factors which include ELs language barriers, low-socioeconomic challenges, and minority status are not considered. Based on the high risk low-socioeconomic factors Hispanic ELs bring to literacy learning, additional instructional contexts and strategies need revisiting so that teachers can implement different techniques that foster the development of their long-term literacy skills in English (Hickman et al., 2004). Finally, with the growing population of ELs in schools, educators and researchers are continually seeking new avenues to teach language and literacy skills to ELs (Collins, 2004).

During the past 20 years, research conducted on Dialogic Reading (DR) interventions supported that ELs literacy skills are developed and supported in the acquisition of language, new vocabulary building, and understanding of text in English (Valdez-Menchaca & Whitehurst, 1992). However, the research has been restricted to pre-school ELs, home-learning, and groups of mixed ethnic minority populations. There is a gap in the research surrounding dialogic reading discourse effects on literacy skills in formal school setting with solely Hispanic kindergarten in an urban school in a low-socioeconomic area. Finally, while there is a substantial amount of research in the area of

language acquisition for these ELs, there is little evidence of the effects of storybook reading and dialogic discourse on reading comprehension.

The reviewed literature presents the notion that DR interactions within pre-school institutions support young children's development of all pre-reading skills including oral language development and emergent literacy skills. These skills need to be mastered by young children as readers so that they may experience sustained reading achievement during their later years of schooling (Arnold et al., 1994; Whitehurst et al. 1988; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Thus, the researcher decided undertake the task of identifying whether teachers' integration of DR discourse strategies was an effective strategy to use with ELs.

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this study was to identify reading performance differences of Hispanic ELs kindergarteners' reading skills when teachers integrate DR discourse into the language arts and reading instructional block. Two teachers received training in DR techniques and two other teachers remained untrained. The researcher investigated whether DR discourse as implemented by a trained teacher (independent variable) influenced the vocabulary score (dependent variable) and comprehension score (dependent variable) of Hispanic ELs, as measured by the FAIR and the SAT-10, respectively. The students were 5 to 6-year-old kindergarten Hispanic, ELs attending a low socioeconomic, urban elementary school. The ascertained information will add to the body of research surrounding DR that field teachers can refer to concerning the instruction of primary ELs.

Research Questions

The research questions investigated which, supports the purpose of this study included the following:

Question 1: Are the mean vocabulary scores of Hispanic ELs whose teachers have been trained to utilize DR discourse higher than the mean vocabulary scores of Hispanic ELs whose teachers have not been trained to utilize DR discourse strategies?

Question 2: Are the mean comprehension scores of Hispanic ELs whose teachers have been trained to utilize DR discourse strategies higher than the mean comprehension scores of Hispanic ELs of teachers who have not been trained to utilize DR discourse strategies?

Vygotsky's Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical basis for this study was guided by the research framework that social interactions and dialogic discourses within a shared reading experience can be conducive to the successful development of reading skills in young ELs. This premise derives from Vygotsky's works and his social interaction learning theory, whose main principles include: (a) children construct knowledge through interactions in a social setting; (b) social context cannot be separated from learning development as learning is a social activity; (c) learning leads to new development when children can make meaning of the world around them; (d) language is the primordial tool in the child's development and serves as a social platform in which children can experiment with oral and written expressions; and (e) in order for learning to take place, children must engage in interactions. Learning under the Vygotskyan principles is a social act that is enhanced

through the use of tools. Under this framework, language is a tool used by all cultures to conduct interactions (Vygotsky, 1976).

From Vygotsky's works, one understands that language development and the creation of meaning in the literacy process is socially constructed (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). Vygotsky explained how one's sense of knowing who one is or consciousness lies in socially meaningful activities and in the interactions in which one engages. Furthermore, in his *Thought and Language*, Vygotsky (1962) emphasized how thought is established through language. The learning of language and the development of thought first takes place as overt (external), conscious human speech within those social origins. As children first use language and words in home interactions, understanding Vygotsky's position that language and thought are mediated through interactions suggests a strong argument for the integration of a dialogic approach to fostering the development of a child's literacy skills.

Vygotsky's idea of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) can be applied to the instruction of reading skills through the use of dialogic reading interactions. This construct surrounds the notion that there is a gap between the zone of the child's actual development level and the level of potential development. This gap occurs while a learner is engaged in a challenging activity that cannot be independently completed and needs support in the completion of the activity. Dixon-Krauss (1996) pointed out in her studies that at schools, "Teachers mediate or augment the child's ability to perform various learning tasks by providing guidance and support primarily through social dialogue" (p. 15). At home, parents have the same opportunity to support their children through interactions, support, and dialogue that target their ZPD in the task of literacy building

and reading skills development. Whereas, in the school setting, teachers assume this role in order to build the literacy skills of these children.

Gee (2001), in what he called cognition studies surrounding language learning, language usage, and making meaning from language, contended that language development is situated in the existing situations and conditions in which one is engaged. He also considered this learning phenomenon as a social act. In essence his theory states that language development is connected and situated in experiences and in interactions in the world as the child experiences it. He has found parallels in this perspective on language and making meaning from language in reading instruction and creating meaning from reading. Dialogic reading experiences allow the child to create meaning in a socially situated setting. Gee supports Vygotsky (1978) notions in claiming that there must be an *overt focusing* and *scaffolding by masters* so that the patterns are sorted for the learner and so that the creation of meaning transpires in social environments.

Au (1993) contended that both the zone of proximal development and scaffolding are appropriate tools for adults to provide assistance to the children until they can independently complete the task. Thus, the role of the teacher in the school setting is important in the development of ELs' skills. The DR experiences allow for the teacher to scaffold their literacy skills' learning by mediating child's pre-existing knowledge with the new knowledge encountered in the second language (Collins, 2004).

Within the parameters of scaffolding and providing assistance to children as they develop reading skills such as vocabulary knowledge and understanding what is read, dialogic reading (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998; Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2003) is a technique where the adult reads and prompts the child with questions in reference to the

story. This technique provides the children opportunities to discourse about the story with adult scaffolding the learning in order to broaden the child's oral recounts, to evoke the child's reasoning, and to reinforce the child's reading skills in the areas of vocabulary development and reading comprehension.

Significance of Study

Developing strong early literacy skills at a young age is a predictor of reading achievement in later academic years of all learners. Providing children with book reading practices have evidenced long-term positive impact on children's reading (Dickinson, McCabe, & Anastasoupoulos, 2002; Snow, Tabors, & Dickinson, 2001). Based on the high risk of primary ELs, it would be purposeful for teachers to integrate instructional techniques that promote students reading success and achievement at all levels of formal schooling. Shared picture book reading in the form of DR discourse provides the child opportunities to engage in interactive dialogue through the use of language in the development of new skills (Reese & Cox, 1999; Valdez-Menchaca & Whitehurst, 1992). Teachers need to become aware if engaging Hispanic ELs in meaningful contexts and dialoguing about stories leads to their acquisition of literacy skills and oral English language development so in turn they can function in a literate world.

Delimitations

The study took place with self-identified Hispanic, kindergarten ELs enrolled in an urban school. Although the demographics of the urban area are varied, the small sample size, the targeted grade levels, and the ethnic composition of the sampled population are inherent to this study. The researcher utilized archived FAIR pretest results completed in September 2012. The materials used included story picture books

and Big Books titles from Read Together Talk Together (RTTT*)* DR curriculum (Whitehurst, 2002). Also, the study entailed the completion of a FAIR posttest and the Standardized Achievement Test (SAT-10).

Definitions

Dialogic Reading

Dialogic Reading (DR) is defined as an interactive shared picture book reading practice where the adult and the child switch roles so that the child learns to become the story teller as guided by the adult. The adult reads the story and then prompts the child to dialogue about the book through five open-ended questioning techniques – completion, recall, open-ended, wh (what, who, when, where, and why), and distancing questioning (CROWD; Whitehurst et al, 1988). The adult's role was to be both a listener and questioner (What Works Clearinghouse, 2006, 2007). DR is a reading experience that was developed in the 1980s and first presented in 1988 by Whitehurst et al. The program can be implemented by teachers with children individually or in small groups. Instructors can be trained via videotaped training format and supported through role-playing and group discussion (Whitehurst et al., 1988). For the purpose of this study, the operational definition of DR encompasses the open-ended discourse prompted by the adult reader during the shared storybook reading in order to build ELs' vocabulary knowledge and story comprehension as measured by the SAT-10 scores. According to *What Works Clearinghouse* (2007), in their published study findings of 300 preschool low-SES children identified DR techniques had positive effects on these children's oral language.

Discourse

Discourse in this study refers to the dialogue about storybook text that takes place between the teacher and the children. More specifically, it is the children's engagement in a discussion by responding to open-ended questions prompted by the teacher in order to have learners construct meaning of text and understanding of new vocabulary (Bourdage & Rehark, 2009).

Reading Comprehension

According to the published National Reading Panel Report (2000), it refers to comprehension as the essence of reading and the essential element to both academic and lifelong learning. Webster (2002) referred to its meaning as the following: (a) the act or action of grasping with intellect and understanding; (b) knowledge gained by comprehending; and (c) the capacity for understanding fully (p. 236). In respect to story reading comprehension, it has been defined as a cognitive process that integrates complex skills in making meaning from text through understanding the critical role of vocabulary as it presented in the context of a storybook (Collins, 2004). For the purpose of this study, reading comprehension will be referred to the child's ability to understand, to make meaning, and to construct new knowledge through dialogue of the story's written text, pictures, storyline, and story element as measured by the reading comprehension scores on the SAT-10.

Shared Storybook Reading

Shared Book Reading involves an adult reading a book to one child or a small group of children without requiring extensive interactions from them (*What Works Clearinghouse,* September 28, 2006). Also, researchers have defined a shared book

reading as an experience in which a group of two or three children sit close enough to see the print on the page as the book is being read to them (Brown, Cromer, & Weinberg, 1986). For this study, shared book reading is defined as a teacher reading aloud and giving children the opportunities to become engaged participants in the dialogue by asking questions surrounding the pictures, text, characters, and storyline. This evocative strategy during the reading session has evidenced student performance gains in language, vocabulary, and reading comprehension (Arnold et al., 1994; Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2000).

Traditional Reading Instruction

Within the control group of the study, teachers taught literacy skills during the reading and language arts lesson block with traditional reading methods. For the purpose of this study traditional methods entailed teachers reading the story aloud from the basal text, using phonics and comprehension worksheets, and conducting vocabulary instruction (Gunter, Estes, & Schwab, 2003).

Vocabulary Knowledge

Research has evidenced that vocabulary size and knowledge of kindergarten students is a predictor of reading comprehension (Scarborough, 1998).Vocabulary knowledge is defined as the number of words that a child knows. It includes both recognition of the words including their phonetic interpretation, syntax, and semantic meaning both in isolation and in context (Collins, 2004). For the purpose of this research, vocabulary knowledge was defined as the words children know, pronounce, understand, and utilize to communicate with others (Snow, 2002).

Summary

The development of strong reading skills at a young age is a crucial element for children to experience success in their learning (Durkin, 1966). DR discourse during the reading experience is a viable tool for teachers to utilize to provide young ELs an opportunity to experience success in their reading learning. This chapter focused on the description of DR discourse strategies, definitions of the study's terms, the theoretical frameworks that support DR discourse implementation, and the inquiry associated with the present study. The subsequent chapter reviews the supporting research and studies in the development of young children's literacy skills.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Learning to read is a complex process that young children must master in order to be able to communicate and to function in a literate society. Inherent literacy skills that must be mastered while learning how to read include knowledge about language, print, vocabulary, meanings, and understanding (Arnold et al., 1994). As educators and policy makers make significant decisions about early childhood education and the best means by which to teach reading and overall literacy skills, the debate continues in the empirical literature about how best to teach children to accomplish that task. The complexity is broadened by the most recent U.S. Census (2010) data that predicts a continuing increase in the number of Hispanics in the US population. These numbers present a new challenge in the early childhood classroom, as teachers teach young English Learners (ELs) to master literacy and reading skills.

The first part of this literature review will cover the empirical research on the development of language and vocabulary acquisition and its impact on learning to read. Both of these issues will be examined in the context of ELs. The second part of the literature will examine the research pertaining to instructional practices such as reading aloud, shared reading, and seminal studies surrounding dialogic reading. Additionally, research studies surrounding how children learn to read at a young age have also been reviewed in order to present a comprehensive synopsis of how this inquiry topic adds to the research base. These sections, when combined will provide sufficient background information to support the current dissertation research and fill the gap posed by the inquiry questions in the area of dialogic reading discourse and ELs in primary education.

More specifically, it addresses the need for resources and discussions on practices that improve teacher instruction of primary ELs in the development of reading skills such as vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension in formal schooling settings.

ELs Language and Vocabulary Acquisition

For many years, research studies have evidenced the benefits of reading orally with young children (Ninio, 1983; Crain-Thorenson & Dale, 1999). These benefits consist of augmented language skills, increased vocabulary skills acquisition, and enhanced comprehension skills in young children including those that are ELs (Valdez –Menchaca & Whitehurst, 1992; Robbins& Ehri, 1994; Senechal & Lefevre, 2001; Collins, 2004). With the increased numbers of ELs attending primary schools, both researchers and teachers are focused on learning more about oral language and literacy skills development for who English is the second language. Empirical research on children learning to read in a new language delineates several impacting factors in fostering the development of literacy skills. More specifically, research on English Learners (ELs), have also documented level of socio-economic status, proficiency level of English as a second language (L2), background experiences knowledge brought into the reading experience in the first language (L1), and varied levels of home literacy practices that support the development of literacy skills in the second language (English) as factors that affect the development of reading skills (Au, 1993, Valdez-Menchaca & Whitehurst, 1988).

According to Hart and Risely (1995) children in poverty lag behind their more affluent peers in areas of vocabulary and oral language skills. These findings which are supported by Snow et al. (1998) indicate that young children from impoverished home

environments are more likely to lack pre-literacy skills at kindergarten entry than their more affluent peers. Lagging in these skills during the first few years of formal schooling for ELs could mean lower reading proficiency and lower reading comprehension than those of their peers in their later schooling years (Snow, 2002; Collins, 2004).

In support of these learners and in order to determine factors that deterred them from acquiring literacy skills, Chall and Snow (1988) observed and interviewed 30 low-income fourth grade students and their families from a Northeastern public school. Their focus was to determine the effect of income level on learners' reading achievement. The main thrust for their study was focused on children reading to learn content and material from read texts. Their study demonstrated the children from low-income demographics were able to progress during the primary grades if they had teachers who provided instruction from basal readers above the child's reading level, provided explicit instruction in comprehension of content-area texts, emphasized vocabulary development instruction during reading language arts, instructed via through the use of a wide spectrum of reading levels and materials, and utilized field trips and activities to expose learners to new experiences in an attempt to build background knowledge and new vocabularies. More importantly and aligned with the focus of this inquiry, teachers who instructed the children to read for comprehension evidenced learning reading gains when they showed them how to infer vocabulary meanings from the read context. The implications of their findings called for the implementation of strong instructional programs in the primary grades that integrate instruction of word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. Finally, the study highlighted the need to address reading challenges and difficulties early that are impacted by barriers such as low socio-economic status and

children's native languages (Chall & Snow, 1988). As it is the case in this research study whereas the children are ELs in a low-socioeconomic, urban school.

A young child's level of vocabulary knowledge has been identified as a predictor of reading achievement in later years (Valdez-Menchaca & Whitehurst, 1988; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002; Collins, 2004; 2008). Furthermore, assimilating vocabulary knowledge during the early childhood years is conducive to retaining knowledge of learned words (Hart & Risely, 1995). Vocabulary knowledge can be defined as the words a child knows, can pronounce, understand its meaning in different contexts, and convey understanding in communicating with others (Snow, 2002). Collins (2004) also suggests vocabulary knowledge is the number of words a child knows and is able to use it within and outside context. Addressing how children learn new words is vital to developing instruction of ELs learning to read because it is a predictor of reading achievement in later years.

Whitehurst and Valdez-Menchaca's (1992) study showed the effects picture book reading had on twenty preschoolers in a day care for students from low-income homes in Mexico. Their findings supported that dialogic reading interventions were effective on children's language development. Within the experimental group children's spontaneous verbalizations were assessed as they interacted with a female adult who asked them open ended questions during the reading of a story. Children's responses were evaluated using transcripts and codes. Also, a comparative analysis between the control and experimental (dialogic reading interventions were applied) evidenced higher levels of performance in the areas of language quotient means and tests. This research set out to extend findings presented by Whitehurst et al. (1988) whose studies demonstrated that dialogic reading interventions perpetuated a wide and sustained effect on children's language by

encouraging the child to talk about the pictures, having the child responding to questions, and by providing feedback to the child on the responses. This study was primordial in evidencing the use of dialogic reading interventions was successful in the development of language in children of low-income parents in three specific areas: (a) the instruction of language to non-native English speakers, (b) the relation between picture book reading activities and language learning, and (c) early educational intervention for disadvantaged children. Further findings of this study also presented implications for a new area of study. First, findings supported that joint picture book reading that is interactive and the child engages in dialogue with the adult positively impacts the language development during primary years which is the focus of this inquiry. Also, economically disadvantage children's require interventions that increase proficiency and efficiency in the areas of reading and language development. The instructional implications for future research which arose from this study laid the foundation for the present inquiry which seeks to evidence how teachers can integrate dialogic reading model intervention in the teaching of reading on a day to day basis in instruction of reading to ELs (Valdez-Menchaca & Whitehurst, 1992).

In the studies of Collins (2004, 2008) more reasons are cited as to why educators need to comprehend how children develop vocabulary knowledge, the experience and resources that are conducive to children's acquisition of new vocabulary, and the instructional practices that are primordial in the teaching of vocabulary skill. She asserts that storybook reading is the most viable technique for the instruction of vocabulary knowledge. In her studies with 80 Portuguese 4-5 year old kindergartens who were also second language learners (ELs), she focused on determining the effects of providing

explicit explanations of targeted vocabulary during storybook reading on the learners baseline vocabulary acquisition. The experimental design applied a between subjects effect of treatment on targeted vocabulary also entailed reading of a book over a three-week timespan in a small group setting. In the experimental group, a total of eight books were read to the children. Each time, vocabulary words were selected by the researcher. The words however were not those that were found within the context of the narratives. Children were distributed amongst three groups: experimental, control, and a no story group who only participated in the target vocabulary assessments. A battery of assessments were utilized to measure learners' English receptive vocabulary, Portuguese receptive vocabulary, home storybook reading practices, and targeted vocabulary (TV). A one-way ANOVA was conducted on the pre-test data and multiple regressions were used to test the predictors of differences and to determine the impact of treatment after the predicators were statistically monitored. A subsequent model under the study set out to determine home reading frequency practices of the learners in English, Portuguese, or Both by having the parents' complete questionnaires asserting time reading storybooks to children.

In examining the statistical results, Collins (2004, 2009) found that the treatment group had the largest significant contribution to vocabulary learning in the regression model. Mean scores differed by group with the experimental group (M=26.50, SD = 7.02) scoring higher than the control group (M = 13.80, SD =2.35). Another insight from Collins' work, exemplified that home reading practice which was part of the studies' design had an indirect effect on the targeted vocabulary through discussions and practices in the group where home reading frequency was noted and children were read to in either

home language or in English. From Collins' findings one can surmise that targeting specific English vocabulary words during the reading aloud sessions can have significant effects on the emergent reading skills of young ELs. More, importantly and aligned with this inquiry, findings substantiated the hypothesis that targeting the vocabulary growth of ELs through storybook readings and discussions was conducive to gains in vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension.

Story Reading and Vocabulary Development

Several other researchers have also identified factors and setting where children learn new vocabulary words which include engagement in story reading, involvement in dialogue, exposure to new words in context and content, and for school children, explicit instruction of words encountered in the classroom and readings is a viable medium for enhancing children's vocabulary knowledge particularly those that are English Language Learners (Elley, 1989; Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Whitehurst et al., 1994; Hart & Risely, 1995; Wasik, 2006).

Elley (1989) conducted two separate experiments with 157, 7-8-year olds in seven different classrooms in Christianchurch, New Zealand where the classroom teachers would read the stories aloud. The participants' first language was English. The guiding inquiry for the first study was to determine if the children would learn new words and word meanings from the read alouds without listening to explanation and clarification of such words. This is in direct contrast with Collins (2004, 2009) methodology which called targeting and conducting instruction of specific vocabulary words. Within this first experimental study, Elley identified six variables which can lead to vocabulary gains in children: (a) number of text occurred in story; (b) number of times the word was

illustrated in story; (c) assistance with verbal meaning cues; (d) word as important to the plot development; (e) vividness of the word itself or how easily the word could be envisioned; and (f) concept familiarity surrounding the word. The differences from the posttest against the administered pre-test indicated that all children made approximately 15% gain in the acquisition of new vocabulary. Thus, from this study Elley concluded that stories read aloud to children were a potential source for children to acquire new vocabulary.

In his subsequent and second experiment, Elley (1989) included a sample population of 127 students, 72 were part of the experimental group and 55 in the control group. For this study, pre and posttests were conducted; data was analyzed to identify correlation against the six identified variables in vocabulary acquisition. As part of the experimental design, two different treatments were applied, reading of the stories with explanations of targeted vocabulary words and reading of the stories without explanations. The results of the studies showed the mean for vocabulary gain from pretest to posttest measures, the gains from reading without explanation was 14.8 percent while the overall gain for children in the group that had reading with explanation averaged a gain of 39.9 percent. From this subsequent study, Elley (1989) supported the initial findings that that children acquire new vocabulary from having illustrated stories read to them. More importantly, he concluded that in case where teachers are providing explanations of encountered words during the story reading, children's vocabulary acquisition gains are more than doubled. This inquiry set out to show if ELs' vocabulary acquisition gains were higher when children were engaged in the reading and dialoguing about the story and story's vocabulary.

Reading stories to determine vocabulary growth of kindergarten children as the study focus conducted by Robbins and Ehri (1994). They sought to prove that reading aloud to children by adults leads vocabulary acquisition gains. The sampled population consisted of 38 (12 girls and 21 boys) English-speaking kindergarten children. As part of the procedures, the story was read on two different occasions, briefly discussed, and no word meanings were disseminated. Posttest vocabulary scores were analyzed utilizing Cohen and Cohen's (1983) multiple regression correlation analysis and hierarchical procedures. Between subjects effects and dependent variables were also analyzed. Their findings showed that children with prior vocabulary knowledge had the most significant gains in the learning of new words. A fact which slightly contrasted Elley's (1989) where they implied that all children learned new vocabulary from listening to the stories and viewing the illustrations. Regardless, Robbins and Ehri's study results were aligned with Elley's in that exposure to vocabulary during repeated storybook readings by adults led to at least minimal gains as denoted in their PPVT-R (Dunn & Dunn 1981) posttests. To further expand on Robbins & Ehri's findings, this inquiry is focused on showing if vocabulary scores gains of non-native English speaking kindergarteners and first evidence growth when teachers read aloud stories and discourse about the text and vocabulary.

In view of the scarcity of research that was then available dealing with the cognitive skill impact the vocabulary of very young (preschool) children, Senechal, Thomas, & Moniker, (1995) conducted two experiments to evaluate how children who differ in the extent of vocabulary knowledge learned new vocabulary from listening to stories being read aloud to them. They also studied the effectiveness of techniques used

by parents to teach vocabulary during the story reading was related to children's pre-existing knowledge of vocabulary words. The researchers were very specific in citing Robbins & Ehri's (1994) work's which presented how kindergartener children learn new words while listening to their parents read aloud to them. Additionally, they delineated a step-by step synthesis of how children process book information in order to learn new words. The steps included the following: (a) encode and sustain a phonological symbol for new word; (b) obtain word meaning from contextual, semantic, syntactic, or pictorial clues; (c) create or construct potential word meaning; (d) correlate the inferred meaning with the phonological symbol of the word; and (e) store the newfound knowledge with the existing knowledge base. Thus, new vocabularies are encoded, comprehended, associated, and stored for subsequent use by the learner.

More findings from Senechal et al.'s (1995) work stressed that learner's prior knowledge is a key element in children learning from context in the construction of new vocabulary and new knowledge. To further support their inquiry, they initiated a new research evidencing that children benefit from answering questions about new words during the reading experience. Additionally, they contended that children also benefit from having adults give information about new words through modeling, elaborating, or expanding techniques - a strategy which is also pursued by this inquiry in the building of new vocabulary. Thus, the authors hypothesized that verbal participation by the child during the storybook reading would be enhance their comprehension and understanding of new vocabulary because the children were given practice opportunities to encode and associate new information. The main thrust of their studies consisted of working with 32 students, 4 to 6-years of age whose parents came from a low socioeconomic status. The

students participated individually in three reading sessions of approximately 35 minutes each. They were pretested and protested in order to gauge their production of comprehension vocabulary.

During the second portion of the experiment, 48 children averaging four years who were classified as having high or low prior vocabulary knowledge followed the same procedures. Two different vocabulary assessments measured were used. First, comprehension vocabulary was assessed by testing children's ability to recognize uninstructed examples of new words from a variety of pictures. Second production vocabulary was measured by children's capacity to produce new words from book illustrations using retrieval cues. Several key paradigms resulted from this study that are also amongst the focus of this inquiry determining if dialogic reading discourse during the reading experience positively impacts vocabulary development and the understanding of read narrative. First, while these researchers did not find individual differences in vocabulary knowledge and reading conditions between the pre and posttest, statistical data, it did demonstrate that all children benefited from the practice opportunities in the acquisition of novel words. Next, the data findings also supported that children with a wider array of prior vocabulary knowledge acquired more words than children who did not. A finding which was also evidenced the study results of Robbins and Ehri (1994).

Furthermore, the authors' findings support this inquiry demonstrating that asking children questions during the book reading is beneficial to children who differ in word knowledge as it may be the case of non-English speaking learners. While the types of questions asked differed from Whitehurst's (1988) open-ended question techniques, the children still learned new words and began to formulate understanding of read text. Their

model included questioning and prompting children through pointing, labeling, or identifying pictorial clues. Nonetheless, the children were prompted during reading session and findings evidenced the children's word knowledge base increased.

Senechal et al. (1995) appealed for the completion of further inquiries that attempt to identify and pinpoint the contribution various types of questions adults can use during the book reading that are conducive to children's learning and vocabulary development. They proposed abandoning simple models of teaching literacy and language development skills and incorporating complex and multifaceted models to teach literacy skills. A viable model recommended for parents and early childhood educators to follow when reading picture books to children is to have children actively responding to questions during the reading experience (Senechal, et al., 1995). In order to substantiate the feasibility of utilizing their suggested model as a teaching practice in the instruction of ELs learning read, this inquiry sets out to prove their notion.

Storybook Reading and Overall Literacy Skills

According to Teale (2003), reading aloud to children as an instructional activity has been denoted as "the single most important activity for building knowledge required for eventual success in reading." (p. 23) after the publication of Becoming a Nation of Readers in 1985 by the National Academy of Educations' Commission on Reading, the National Institute of Education, and the Center for the Study of Reading. In his review, Teale presents that even after much research has been completed on the topic, reading aloud between adults and children remains the central foci of both early childhood literacy researchers and practitioners. Snow et al., 1998, 2000 (as cited by Teale, 2003) and the International Reading Association/National Education for the Young as

recommended reading aloud as a means for parents and teachers to promote children's early literacy development. Thus, Even Start, Head Start, and early childhood educators place a strong emphasis on reading aloud to children both at home and in the instructional setting.

Teale claims that when it comes to integrating a storybook read-aloud for instructional purposes in the classrooms, teachers view the experience as part of the larger curriculum that specific literacy skills or strategies be emphasized during the read-aloud intervention. In addition, he extensively reviews studies of how teachers in the classroom should read to children has been analyzed that have had significant positive effects on children's achievement. From his findings, he claims that while not one specific read-aloud style has been proven more successful than others, he contends that what teachers and children talk about before, during, and after reading has a significant effect on children content and learning and as a result it also impacts children's knowledge of literacy. Additionally, he makes the following suggestions that are also inferred by Whitehurst et al.'s work (1994). Teale suggests that during the read-alouds, adults should scaffold the child's discussions and reading in order to foster a beneficial experience for the child. This cognitive development and notion is supported by Vygotsky's learning theory on ZPD and scaffolding on whose theoretical framework this present research study is lodged.

Other strategies which Teale is recommending to integrate during the read-aloud for instructional purposes include: (a) teachers need to encourage children to bring their personal background knowledge to the reading experience; b) adult needs to ask questions and elicit reactions in order to invite children to remain active and engaged in

the experience through discussions and predictions; (c) generate talk about the main text ideas; (d) read in a lively and engaging intonation; and (e) talk about a few of the words and text in order to build children's vocabulary knowledge. In his implications for future research, Teale appeals to expanding the research by having studies conducted where read-alouds strategies are integrated in the classroom utilizing his recommendations and where economic, cultural, and linguistic factors are inherent variables with the studied population. In his concluding remarks, Teale restates the notion that in the development of literate individuals, children in early childhood classrooms read-alouds can be a significant instructional activity to develop children's knowledge, comprehension strategies, and disposition towards reading if teachers apply thought and effort to the what is read, why is it being done, and how it is utilized in the classroom (Teale, 2003).

Challenging Teale's (2003) findings are Scarborough and Dobrich's (1994) meta-analysis work on 31 research samples on how much reading and oral language achievement variation for preschoolers who were read aloud by adults concluded that reading aloud to young children accounted for only eight percent of the variance on children's reading ability. In his attempt to negate this finding, Lonigan (1994) reviewed the same sample and his research studies evidenced that a 12 or 13% variance was more accurate.

As cited by Teale (2003), Feitelson et al. (1986), works denote that a read-aloud program for kindergarten or first grade children caused a significant rise on various aspects of children's reading achievement including reading comprehension. Most importantly, their studies were effective in determining that reading aloud "contributes significantly to the language and literacy development of children who are learning to

read in a school-based language that is different from their home language (p. 118). As it is in the case of the present study where the sampled kindergarten children's home language is Spanish and students are labeled as ELs.

In their studies, Feitelson et al. (1997) presented reading-aloud as the intervention integrated with sixteen classes of first grade children who were randomly assigned to one of four treatment groups. The control group comprised of children involved in learning reading activities but they were not engaged in reading experiences in structured read-alouds sessions. After six months of interventions, children in both experimental groups scored significantly higher in all posttests measuring decoding, reading comprehension and picture storytelling than the children in the control group who had not experienced read alouds during the reading sessions.

Storybook reading effects on children's reading skills development was presented in Bus et al. (1995) quantitative meta-analysis results surrounding parent-child storybook reading of 29 studies. Their findings evidenced a .59 combined effect size that book reading had a medium to strong effect on children's language growth, emergent literacy, and reading achievement (Bus et al., 1995). These findings suggested that joint storybook reading represents the most intense contact that young children have with the conventions and rules of written language and, thus, may be a particularly effective way to facilitate children's knowledge about print. Storybook reading may be specifically effective if adult readers emphasize print-related aspects of the text during reading. This is a finding which is also supported by the studies of Dickenson & Tabors (2001) whose qualitative research analysis in reviewing read-alouds to children both in the home and in the classroom stings revealed that read-alouds activities provide a deeper understanding how

children construct meaning during read-alouds and how children apply comprehension strategies during the reading experiences.

Although some of the reviewed literature differed in their conclusive findings, Teale (2002) claimed that overall, in the area of parent-to children read-alouds, most studies were aligned in finding that that storybook reading significant effect supported language and literacy learning including reading comprehension.

Shared Reading Experiences

In the area of read-alouds or shared reading experiences research, a myriad of storybook reading techniques and strategies have been studied that impact all learner's vocabulary development and reading comprehension aptitudes particularly that of second language learners. Reading Aloud (Read Alouds), Shared Reading, and Dialogic Reading (DR) techniques are amongst the variety of strategies utilized by adults in the attempts to engage children in reading and reading development activities. Shared reading is when an adult reads to one child or a small group of children in order to enhance their literacy skills and appreciation for stories (What Works Clearing House, 2006). While, DR also focuses on enhancing children's language and literacy skills, during the reading session, the adult and the learners reverse roles and the children become the storytellers (WWC, 2006). The difference between the strategies lies in the delivery method, the types of questions that are elicited from the reader, and the degree that children dialogue about the story.

Shared pictured book reading is categorized as a ritualized instructional mode of teaching reading where young children comment and label pictures. As they become more adept with language and their oral language begins to resemble written expressions

and print, they begin to assimilate the beginning reading skills including comprehension (Sulzby, 1995). This process can be accelerated by parents or adults who "scaffold their interactions to the appropriate level for their children's skills" (Ninio & Bruner, 1978).

Shared Book Reading Builds Vocabulary Knowledge and Reading Comprehension

Researchers have demonstrated that reading is a viable way for young children to acquire pre-reading skills such as vocabulary knowledge, print-awareness, and story elements structures (Snow, Burns, & Griffin,1998). The act of having young children engage in shared book reading experiences plays an integral role in the development of children's reading skills. (Senechal & Lefevre, 2002; Wasik & Bond, 2001). Adults reading to children has well documented that shared book reading is a way in which all adults including caregivers, parents, and educators can help children acquire early reading skills (Bus, vanIJzendoorn, & Pelligrini, 1995; Bus & vanIJzendoorn, 1999).

Brown et al. (1986) conducted a study on 84 kindergarten student in a public school rural district where 72% of children where on free and reduced lunch (low socio economic). The purpose of the study was to determine if exposing kindergarten children to share book reading experiences would improve their literacy skill and reading readiness for the first grade. It entailed having a control and experimental group where students in the experimental group were read three specific books in small groups (two to three) kindergarten children in approximately 24 reading session during a four- month period. The children in this group also participated in multisensory activities across the curriculum based on the book's theme. No additional instruction took place to emphasize specific literacy skills such as phonics, word recognition, or storylines. The control group's reading instruction took place in a typical kindergarten whole class environment.

Upon assessing all children at the beginning of the first grade's academic year, results evidenced children in the experimental group had a 10% gain in reading readiness performance scores. Relevant points that immersed from the research include that shared reading experiences is a viable and successful method for increasing minimal performance of low-income children. Next, the researchers determined that these shared reading experiences expanded the children's interest and awareness of literacy as the children demonstrated initiatives to read independently, to self-select books from classroom library, and to include inventive writing from their readings. Ultimately, the study documented shared book experiences was a powerful tool for increasing children's literacy skill's awareness, competence, and proficiency (Brown et al., 1986).

The works of Lonigan, Anthony, Bloomfield, Dyer, and Samwell (1999) compared the effects two different shared reading techniques had on the emergent literacy skills of 95 preschool children averaging from 2 to 5 years of age during a six-week timeframe in an urban, low-socioeconomic Florida child care centers. 77% of children were minorities of African-American descent. The design of their study contained three experimental conditions – shared reading, dialogic reading, and a no-treatment group. Children were pretested and post tested upon completion of the intervention treatments utilizing the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R), the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (EOWPVT-R), and the Verbal Expression subscale of the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (ITPA). Their research's purpose was to determine if the differentiated effects between typical shared reading and dialogic reading. The focus of their study was based on the research-supported notion that children become literate through their language interactions with adults. The theoretical

frameworks for their study was supported by Vygotsky's sociocultural paradigms that state that when children become active participants in dialoguing with the adults they transition from a novice status to a more knowledgeable position in the building of new language and skills. The theoretical basis for this inquiry was also supported both by Vygogtsky and Gee's positions which states that language development is connected, situated, and mediated in experiences and in interactions in the world as the child experiences it.

Results from Lonigan et al.'s work showed that both reading experiences had a positive effect on at-risk children's emergent literacy skills. However, in the area of listening comprehension, those children in the DR treatment evidenced higher gains. One of their analyses implied to be different than the procedures of this inquiry. Lonigan et al. stated that conducting the shared sessions in a typical manner were more practical and effective than integrating whole class DR sessions when the adults were reading to a small group of children. Nevertheless, this inquiry sets to disprove this notion and to expand the research that DR discourse during the reading experience in a whole class setting is an effective strategy which generates positive results in the vocabulary development and reading comprehension of young ELs.

Findings from the studies conducted by Arnold (1993) and Arnold et al. (1994) also evidenced the use of shared picture book readings and dialogic reading techniques had positive effects in accelerating language development and reading comprehension. In this study, the researchers sought to replicate the original results of Whitehurst (1988) work and to implement the videotaping training format in training the parents to use strategies associated with DR intervention strategies.

Studies by Senechal and LeFevre (2002) affirmed that children's beginnings in literacy acquisition begin at home and before the onset of a child's formal schooling experience. Moreover, Senechal et al. (1998) delineated the varied types of parent and children shared storybook experiences which were conducive to the development of literacy skills. These researchers presented how parents and children engaged in informal or implicit connections with books and text. Implicit activities included reading aloud with the child. Additionally, parents engaged in explicit and formal connections with the text where the parents taught the child to recognize letters, read words, and write them. In both types of reading experiences, the child's literacy skills were developed. First, the informal experiences and discussions with their parents, led to the development of the children's oral language skills. The explicit and formal reading activities were integral in the development of the children's written language skills. Under both activities the children were actively engaged in discussing the story before, during, and after it was read through the use of open-ended questions, elaboration of child's responses, and the provision of praise and reinforcement.

These engaging interactions where the child engaged in discourse with the adult about the read text when prompted by that adult was the initial beginnings of what became known as DR (DR) techniques that supported the children's leaning of vocabulary and reading skills. The early home reading experiences as it transcended into the early pre-school environments paralleled the DR interventions whose seminal research and results that were established by Whitehurst, Falco, Lonigan, Fischel, Debaryshe, Valdez-Menchaca, & Caulfield (1988) and whose seminal studies were the foundation for this inquiry showed that children who had engaged in literacy experiences

at a very young age had more knowledge of oral language and early literacy skills. Studies imply that parents engage in reading picture books to children with the intent to teach them language and language mechanics (Whitehurst et al., 1988). More research conducted by Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) and Whitehurst et al. (1999) also evidenced that children who entered first grade with a foundation in these literacy skills are better prepared to engage in the task of learning how to read for comprehension when compared to children who had not entered formal schooling with these foundational literacy skills.

Dialogic Reading to Build Vocabulary Skills and Reading Comprehension

Prior to introducing dialogic reading research which supports the effectiveness of dialogic reading in the classroom, the inclusion of studies dealing with overall reading instruction to primary learners in the classroom in order to present how young children learn how to read and what is the most effective reading interventions of young learners needs to be perused. One of the earliest observant of such phenomenon was Dolores Durkin who sought to determine how children learn how to read at an early age.

In her studies, Durkin (1966) sought to pinpoint the sustained effects of acquiring reading skills at an early age at home had on children prior to entering school. In further studies, she designed a qualitative research whose purpose was to identify: (a) What was being done and for what length to prepare students learn how to read through reading instruction?; (b) What constituted being taught or not taught?; and c.) How did children's abilities impact what was taught or practiced during reading instruction in the classrooms?. Two research assistants and the researcher observed in 42 classrooms and interviewed 29 teachers and 24 principals during a two-year period in Illinois. The

findings of the study clearly delineate the most prominent activities that had taken place in the classroom in the instruction of reading to kindergarten. From the 29 observed teachers, activities pertaining to the acquisition reading skills were being taught; some of those included top-to-bottom orientation of texts, word meanings, reading to children, and listening comprehension. Whole class instruction prevailed in all observed classroom and most teachers succumbed to a uniformed methodology in their instructional patterns and few seemed to adjust the instruction based on the children's abilities and level of development. In the implications for future research, Durkin addresses the need for changing the manner of how reading is being taught in primary grades, particularly kindergarten. The researcher recommends further research be implemented that focused on teachers who instruct through the use of strategies that extend beyond teaching phonics and the use of workbooks (Durkin, 1987).

The benefits of dialogic reading as a shared reading intervention that fosters the vocabulary development and early reading skills of young children have been well documented in research studies since the 1980s (In chronological order, Whitehurst 1988, Whitehurst et al. 1994, 1999; Senechal et al., 1995, 1996, Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998; Hargrave & Senechal, 2000; Zevernbergen & Whitehurst, 2003). While typical shared reading activities entails adults reading aloud and children listening to the story, the dialogic reading session involves adult reading and children responding to prompts and questions throughout the book reading. During this shared reading strategy, roles are then reversed as the adult becomes more of a listener and the child assumes the role of the storyteller.

Amongst the earliest DR studies which focused on assessing the language acquisition of 24-35 month-old children through parent readings of picture books and the implementation of dialogic reading techniques were the seminal studies of Whitehurst et al. (1988). The study took place in a suburban area of the city whose parents median family income averaged $30,000. There was a control and experimental group and the interventions were monitored during a four- week timeframe for an average of ten minutes on a daily basis. Parents in the experimental group read to the children, asked open-ended evocative questions, elaborated on children's responses in an interactive fashion (dialogic techniques) through feedback and asking more questions. On the other hand, parents in the control group read to the children in a customary story reading fashion. Upon completion of the interventions, students were assessed and the data was analyzed for Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (ITPA), Expressive One word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPT), and audiotape recordings. Results for the posttest evidenced that children in the experimental group were approximately 8.5 months ahead of the control group. Whitehurst et al. (1988) evidenced significant levels of performance. There were several theoretical issues addressed by the researchers that resulted from the study. First, the notion whether joint reading sessions with young children was a contributing factor for the development of language. Findings showed reading to preschool children at home as the most significant factor for later reading achievement. Second, it identified the importance of the varied child's role during the reading experience. The applied intervention (dialogic reading) required more active responses from the child. Findings demonstrated that this technique is a critical element in reading interventions. Third, the notion whether degree and extent of child-centered

speech contributes to language development of young children. Although, only in an experimental fashion, the researchers implied how parents talk to their children during the readings at home can induce language development in children. Examples cited related to the prompting techniques integrated by the parents in eliciting response elaborations from the children during the experiences. Additionally, parents who provided children with praise and reinforcement when they provided feedback to the children ultimately led to increased use of language by the children. The researchers called for further research in analyzing if varying the parental approaches during the reading experience through the use of open-ended questions (dialogic techniques) significantly impacted children's language development in a positive fashion during an expanded period of time as their study's duration was comprised of a four-week timeframe (Whitehurst et al., 1988).

Additional studies which supported the findings established by the seminal work established by Whitehurst et al.(1988) and Whitehurst & Lonigan (1998) was the action-research study conducted by Roselli (2009) where it was found that dialogic reading supported the emergent literacy skills of young ELs and their respective teacher' instructional needs in pre-school settings. The literacy, emergent skills included the acquisition of new vocabulary, oral language development, and early reading and writing skills development. For the study, the researcher observed and videotaped four preschool teachers during the shared reading events. The data was analyzed through quantitative and qualitative methods. Of the four observed teachers', two had Mexican origins, three were fluent in both English and Spanish and one had basic foundation knowledge of Spanish. Their teaching experience ranged from five to 10 years. The researchers were

focused how teachers integrated DR into the shared reading session in the instruction of ELs in order to build language and literacy development skills. From this study, Roselli identified the manners in which teacher initiated inquiry-oriented prompting questions varied regardless if some had been trained on DR techniques. Teachers in small group reading session asked more low-level and known-answer questions than teachers who generated the questions to a large group setting to initiate conversations and discourse. In the end, several other findings were also denoted. First, children's native language supported comprehension of the lesson. This notion has been supported by findings in several inquiries (Valdez-Menchaca & Whitehurst, 1992).

Supporting the findings of Whitehurst's seminal work, Blom-Hoffman et al. (2006) elaborated on how parental support in the use of dialogic reading strategies with preschool, toddler children impacted the development of their oral language and emergent literacy skills. Its main purpose was to establish (DR) as a shared reading experience where the child becomes the storyteller and the adult assumes the role of facilitator in expanding the child's verbal responses in the development of children's language and pre-reading skills. Additionally, the researchers sought to determine if training the parents via the use of video-based training program, Read Together, Talk Together (RTTT) developed by Whitehurst and Pearson Learning Company (2002) on the dialogic reading strategies was a viable and effective tool in orienting them to the reading interventions and strategies. They identified several advantages for using this video format during the parent training phase of the program. Amongst the most primordial reasons include cost and time efficiency, strategy and produced behavioral modeling standardization, and consistency in ensuring delivery of program by the adults.

The researchers hypothesized that through the use of the RTTT video training format, the parents would engage in higher levels of verbalizations with the children after viewing the video and also they would exceed the verbalization engagements of those parents who did not view the video. The study was conducted with 18 parent dyads at two urban child care centers in the Northeast during a 12-week period. The randomly selected families were from ethnically and racially diverse families. Observational and interval recording procedures of parent-child interactions were recorded by trained research assistants.

The results of the reading observations during the shared book reading sessions evidenced that parents trained via the RTTT video format maintained high levels of facilitating verbalizations with the children. Next, it demonstrated that parents' use of the DR strategies was more prevalent by parents who had viewed the video. Furthermore, the study evidenced that children's levels of expressive verbalizations increased when they parents implemented DR strategies during the shared book reading experience. Implications for future research call for the use of this training format with other groups including families whose first language is not English or with children learning to read in other settings as it established that the use of RTT video assists adults in the learning of DR strategies. The researchers emphasized how practitioners can play an integral role in dissemination and integration of DR strategies in the development of children's reading skills.

The use of videotape training format in the teaching of DR strategies to adults is further supported in Blom-Hoffman et al. (2006) probing of its effects on children's pre-literacy skills development. The researchers well documented the support of Whitehurst and colleagues work (Whitehurst et al 1988, 1999) on DR in settings such as daycares,

home, and early childhood schools and its effects on children's receptive and expressive language skills and emergent literacy skills such as phonemic awareness, letter naming, and consonant blending. Additional studies cited by the researchers revealed that DR training was a more effective way to implement the DR than the traditional training introduced by Whitehurst et al. in 1988 and subsequently studied during the past three decades.

Just as recently, Wasik et al. (2006) documented the effects on language and literacy skills development through the integration of interventions by teachers in Head Start day care centers during storybook reading activities. Teachers were trained on three different parts during the reading unit experiences: (a) asking questions; (b) building vocabulary; and (c) making connections. In this study, the researchers had 16 teachers, six of which were in the control group and 10 in the experimental group. A total of 207 preschoolers ranging from 2 to 4-years of age were part of the study. The experimental group consisted of 139 learners and the control group had 68 children. The setting was a high poverty area. All children were individually pretested during September and post tested during the end of May and beginning of June on the PPVT–III (Dunn & Dunn, 1997). Findings from this research showed children learn to use oral language by engaging in dialogue. Children in the intervention classrooms engaged in conversations, expressed and elaborated on their ideas, feelings, and reactions to stories and activities. These opportunities to converse set the contexts within which children acquired new words. Also, another finding evidenced by the researchers revealed that high-quality interventions yields positive impact on high poverty children's abilities and overall reading achievement.

In their study, Wasik, Bond, & Hindman (2006) had several objectives. First, they set out to determine if intensive language and literacy interventions as designed by them would have the same effect in settings where Head Start teachers taught economically disadvantage children. Next, they wished to determine if teachers could be trained how to talk to children during the reading experience. Third, the researchers wanted teachers to extend themselves and engage students in discourse strategies in order to increase the oral opportunities of children during the reading experience. Finally, the researchers wanted to determine whether the impact of using discourse strategies is an essential component for language development when larger samples of teachers were involved. The interventions consisted of a teachers working with approximately 18-20 students. The reading of the story and the discourse associated during the reading experience was conducted whole group. The premises for the oral language development were lodged research conducted by Dickinson and Snow (1988) which evidenced that teacher's discourse with the children impact the development of children's language for several reasons. The teachers included discourse interactions that were conversational in format so that the children were given opportunities to speak, listen, and vary their oral vocabulary. Teachers practice and promoted active listening techniques, modeled the use of rich language, and provided feedback on their responses.

In one study, Hargrave and Senechal (2000)conducted their research in a daycare center was with 36 preschool children attending two different centers in a low-socioeconomic area in Canada for an average of two-month period. All children were pre-tested during a two-week period prior to the four-week intervention time and post tested two weeks after the application of the interventions. Assessment used included

PPVT-R, EOWPVT-R and a Book Vocabulary tests. The purpose of the study was to assess the significance picture book reading had on children's development of language and vocabulary. One of the study's objective sought to assess whether children with low or poor vocabulary skills learned words from listening to book readings in the day care centers they attended. One teacher and parent group read to the children in customary manner during a ten-minute period five times each week, while the other three teachers and parents were asked to read to the children in a dialogic manner. Both teachers and home intervention parents at this center were trained on DR techniques via the 30 minute videotape format produced by Whitehurst, Arnold, and Lonigan (1999). Furthermore, role-playing and discussions were conducted to ensure fidelity to the dialogic reading training. Additionally, two observations were completed on each of the three teachers in both centers prior and during the interventions to validate their compliance to the instructions and training. Also, in reviewing the past completed studies surrounding the topic, the researchers found the lack of the enactment of a control group where children were read in a regular fashion during the reading sessions. They emphasized the advantages of including a control group because it permeates the assessment of whether children learn more from regular reading sessions or from the dialogic reading model reading sessions.

Other components of the Whitehurst et al. (1988) studies that were included was that both groups followed the same frequency the books were read and the readers' style differed in format. The study's reading session extended the ratio of eight children to one reader and the books were read in a circle-time routine with the eight children ranging from three to five-year olds in a pre-assigned group. It is important to note that a gap

exists between the literature and the existing condition where dialogic reading needs to be assessed in whole group scenario with older children in a classroom setting beyond the day-care centers and pre-school settings. Findings demonstrated that children with low or poor vocabulary from shared book-reading experiences. Children in the dialogic reading session made significant gains in expressive language than did children in the regular reading control condition. This finding was consistent with study results by Valdez-Menchaca & Whitehurst, 1992; Arnold, et al., 1994; Whitehurst et al., 1994 that evidenced that dialogic reading can foster the development of expressive language for children from low-income home and often with native language other than English. In contrast, the study's results demonstrated that lack of significant effects on the receptive language development of children in either treatment. Furthermore, results showed that dialogic reading was beneficial to groups larger than the research had established by Arnold et al. (1994) Whitehurst et al. (1998). It expanded the ratio of children to one reader from five to eight children per reader. More research is needed to determine the efficacy of the dialogic reading intervention where the ratio per reader is even further expanded to greater numbers and where both the expressive and receptive vocabulary development of school-aged children is measured. The researchers finding present implication for practitioners in the implementation of new reading intervention programs as the results for this study support the notion that preschool children with poor vocabulary and from low-socioeconomic status could learn expressive vocabulary from listening to story books in which new (novel) words are introduced in print and illustrations (Hargrave & Senechal, 2000). While this study documented the effectiveness of DR as an intervention, Lonigan et al. (1999) also expanded the literature and

documented the use of dialogic reading instruction exclusively within schools but not varied grade levels such as in Kindergarten or first grade.

Many studies have been identified that focused on dialogic reading as they transpired in children's homes with their parents or in day care centers in low socioeconomic areas, few studies have documented the effectiveness of the interventions within the typical school setting with a classroom teacher in a low-socioeconomic neighborhood. These same studies have documented DR as an evidenced-based approach in which adults encourage children to provide more detailed responses to questions and prompts throughout the story reading. Additionally, children's understanding of the story is developed as they become the retellers of the story (Zevenbergen and Whitehurst, 2003). It is important for teachers to recognize DR as a shared reading experience that can impact the development of ELs' reading skills such as vocabulary knowledge and understanding of story.

Concluding Remarks

Upon reviewing the literature, it is evident that several gaps are prevalent between the past studies' findings and the focus this inquiry. The reviewed literature has solely focused in specific areas and premises that warrant additional studies to expand the scope of what has been evidenced. First, in past studies, the student population consisted of pre-kindergarten learners (PK) or learners attending Head Start daycare centers. Moreover, DR interventions were conducted in small groups. The ratio was from four to eight students for every adult. Additionally, of all the adults and caregivers disseminating the Dialogic Reading interventions, none have been teachers in a general education class. Thus, this study was undertaken to expand and augment the existing literature.

Blom-Hoffman et al. (2006) stated school intervention programs are chosen by educators by their allure, popularity, practicality, and ease of implementation. This study entailed investigating if DR strategies discourse as a viable instructional technique for teachers in the school setting to implement in the development of ELs' vocabulary and reading comprehension skills.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The current study utilized a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design to determine and compare the effect of teacher-implemented DR discourse on the vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension of Hispanic Kindergarten English Learners (ELs) in an urban elementary school in Miami-Dade County. DR discourse was implemented in two classrooms (n=31 students), by the classroom teachers, and standard reading instruction (also by the teachers) was continued in the other two classrooms (n=32 students). The following sections provide a detailed description of the participants, measures, research design, treatments, procedures, and data analysis for the research study.

Participants

The study included a total of four teachers and 63 students in Flamingo Elementary, an elementary school in the Miami-Dade County public school (M-DCPS) district. M-DCPS is the fourth largest school district in the United States with a total student population of approximately 345,000. Over 62,000 of those students are ELs and approximately 65% are registered as Hispanic students. Flamingo Elementary is located in Hialeah, Florida. Flamingo Elementary School is a Title I school serving an average of 730 students from a predominantly Hispanic and economically disadvantaged homes.

Teachers

All four teachers in the current study hold a State of Florida professional teaching license in primary learning education with English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement in order to teach ELs. The level of their teaching experiences

ranges from 10 to 32 years. From the five teachers that teach kindergarten at the site, only four teach ESOL self-contained classes and the students they teach are 100% ELs. Those four teachers agreed to participate in the study. All four of teachers are fluent in English and Spanish. As needed, they communicate with caregivers in Spanish. However, English is the language of instruction during the reading sessions and literacy instructional timeframes.

Students

The student population of Flamingo Elementary is 98% Hispanic, 1% Black, and 1% White. Eighty-four percent are economically disadvantaged and receive free or reduced price lunch. Additionally, 5% of students are Students with Disabilities (SWD), 38% are classified as ELs, and nearly 7% of the students are gifted. Approximately 90% of the students at the selected school begin kindergarten without knowing English. The student characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics of Children by Group Level

Study	*N*	Male *N* (%)	Hispanic *N* (%)	ESOL Level 1-5 *N* (%)	Pretest Age Range in Years	Pretest Mean Age Years (SD)
DR	31	15 (48.3)	31 (100)	31 (100)	4.9 – 6.1	5.4 (.36)
Control	32	13(40.6)	32 (100)	32 (100)	4.9 – 6.2	5.4 (.35)
Study Total	63	28 (44.4)	63 (100)	63(100)	4.9 – 6.2	5.4 (.35)

Sampling

The selection of Flamingo Elementary as the site for the current study was based on several factors. First, it is an urban public elementary school located in a low-socioeconomic community. Next, the school serves a primarily Hispanic ELs. Finally, it should also be noted that this is the school where the researcher works and has access to students, teachers, and data. Students were assigned to classrooms (with an attempt to balance gender) at the beginning of the school year by the school's registrar. Student assignment to experimental versus comparison group was based completely on teachers' assignments to the experimental or comparison group. Two teachers were randomly assigned (names drawn from a hat) to either the experimental or control group.

Instrumentation

Florida Assessment of Instruction in Reading (FAIR)

The FAIR assessment was developed by the Florida Center for Reading Research in collaboration with Florida Department of Education's (FLDOE), Just Read Florida project (2009). This assessment system provides K-12 classroom teachers with screening, progress monitoring, and diagnostic information on literacy skills that is essential to guiding reading instruction. The FAIR is administered three times yearly (September, January, and May), by the teacher and is utilized as a Broad Diagnostic Inventory for Grades K-2 and a Diagnostic Toolkit for grades 3-12.

The FAIR's reliability was determined by the FAIR's developers (FLDOE, 2009). Item Response Theory (IRT) makes it possible to report the precision of individual score points, and is particularly useful in evaluating the precision of scores at or near the cut-point. The FAIR K-2 Technical Manual provides IRT precision estimates at the cut-

points for certain broad screen tasks, using a scale similar to that used for alpha coefficients. Reported estimates are consistently above .85, as all estimates are .86 or .87, with the exception of the first assessment period during Kindergarten. The validity of the instrument was determined when the assessment developers established a target goal of 85% negative predictive power, meaning that 85% of students classified according to their scores as not-at-risk would end up not-at-risk on other including other instruments such as SAT-10. The test met the established criterion during the assessment periods.

In the current study, the September 2012 (archived) assessment results were utilized as the pretest scores. Both comprehension and vocabulary pretest scores were used as covariates in the analyses. The May 2013 FAIR vocabulary assessment was utilized as the study's posttest for kindergartners' mean scores.

Stanford Achievement Test, Tenth Edition (SAT-10)

The SAT-10 assessment (Pearson's Harcourt Assessments, 2003), is a standardized test utilized by Miami Dade County School District for assessing children from kindergarten through second grade in the areas of reading comprehension and mathematics. Within the reading comprehension tests is embedded the assessment of children's vocabulary knowledge and sentence reading. The overall achievement scores for this school district are reported as raw scores, stanines and percentile scores. Test reliability, test biases, and evidence for validity are rated satisfactory (Mental Measurements Yearbook, 2009). The assessment content is based on national and state instructional standards, content-specific curricula, and standards outlined by various professional organizations, such as the Standards for the English Language Arts amongst

others. The academic standards for the various states and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test framework were also applied.

The assessment questions were written mostly by teachers. Internal screening of the items included subject matter experts, measurement experts, and other specialists. Item Analysis provided useful statistical information including item difficulty and discrimination and the mean square of test items. Mantel-Haenszel (1999) bias analyses were conducted in order to minimize test bias items.

According to the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA et al., 1999), reliability "'refers to the consistency of such measurements when the testing procedure is repeated on a population of individuals or groups" (p. 25). The SAT-10 and associated subtests' review of the multitude of tables of KR20 coefficients for the full-length test (Forms A and B) illustrates .80s to .90s. Additionally, correlations for the test evidence construct validity whose correlations run .70's to .80s (Mental Measurements Yearbook and Tests in Print, 2012).

This assessment tool has a two-fold function for the assessment of content and literacy. First, it is used as a norm-referenced measure by educational personnel as student learning in relation to a norm group, a requirement mandated by the *No Child Left Behind* legislation (2001). Next, it provided feedback on student performance on areas (clusters) or specific literacy skills (standards) such as vocabulary and comprehension. For the current study, the SAT-10 measure of reading comprehension scores was collected in May of 2013.

The May 2013 SAT-10 was utilized by the researcher to obtain reading comprehension mean scores as opposed to the FAIR results because the SAT-10

assessments provided a more in-depth and comprehensive look at students' overall performance in reading comprehension, while the FAIR comprehension scores are limited in scope and depth. The rationale for using both the FAIR and SAT assessments as the measurement tools is that FAIR was given three times within the academic year and SAT-10 only once. The archived FAIR August 2012 results served as the pre-test data base for the study. Kindergarten children do not take SAT-10 until the last semester of each academic year. Thus, there was no archived SAT-10 results the researcher could have used for these children during the duration of the study.

Research Design

The current study examined whether DR discourse as implemented by a trained teacher (independent variable) influenced the vocabulary score (dependent variable) and comprehension score (dependent variable) of Hispanic ELs, as measured by the FAIR and the SAT 10, respectively. The quasi-experimental study applied an Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of the vocabulary and comprehension mean scores from an experimental group and a "business as usual" comparison group. The covariates were the FAIR pre-test (vocabulary scores) and SAT-10 posttest (comprehension scores). Children in the experimental group received 8 weeks of intervention (DR discourse) as implemented by their teacher during their standard daily 90 minute reading block. The intervention will be described more thoroughly in the section that follows.

The comparison group continued with the standard reading practice already in place at Flamingo Elementary. In these classrooms, regardless of language and literacy levels, kindergartners received reading instruction in English as required by the reading comprehension frameworks in the Houghton Mifflin materials and resource. This series is

M-DCPS's prescribed reading basal and reading curricular resources. All teachers read a new story aloud from the basal with the students. The teacher read the story to students at the beginning of the week and selected 10 vocabulary words from the story to target for vocabulary instruction each week. Students were assessed at the end of the week by asking them to spell the words and to use them in a simple sentence.

As previously mentioned, archived data, collected in September of 2012 were used to assess pre-intervention levels of comprehension and vocabulary. Data were collected by the participating teachers. Intervention training and implementation began in January of 2013 and will be described in greater detail in the sections that follow. Treatment group teachers integrated DR discourse in the instruction of reading and vocabulary during the study's intervention 8-week timeframe. Posttest data, on both the FAIR and the SAT-10, were collected through standardized procedures, by the classroom teachers in May of 2013. A timeline for the current study is presented in Figure 1.

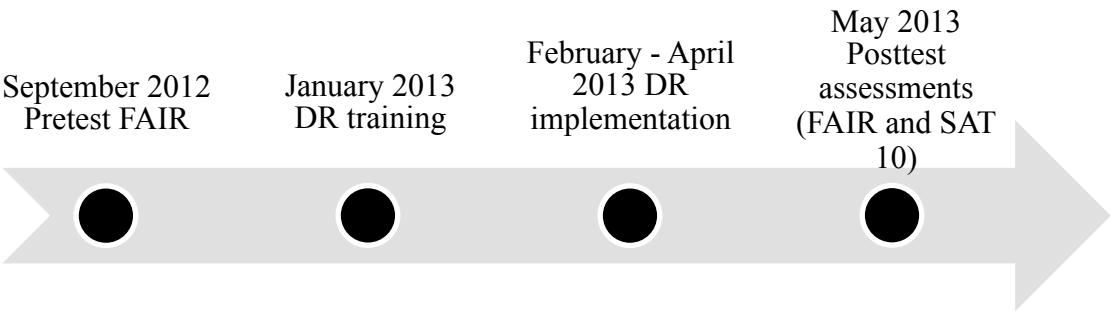

Figure 1. Timeline for Quasi-experimental Study

DR Intervention

Dialogic Reading (DR) is an interactive picture book reading session designed to augment children's language and literacy skills. The adult addresses the students and then assumes the role of a listener rather than a storyteller. During the interactive dialogue, the reader becomes engaged in the story by assuming the role of the story-teller. The use of oral language and dialogue provides the learner the opportunity to use language and enhance it through conversation about the story. DR interventions are designed to have an adult read to the child, followed by the child engaging in a dialogue about the book with the adult, through five specific prompting techniques in: (a) completion, (b) recall, (c) open-ended, (d) wh (what, who, when, where, and why), and (e) distancing questioning (CROWD; Whitehurst et al, 1988). These prompts are better defined as the following:

- Completion: Child completes endings of a sentence.
- Recall: Adult asks questions about the book the child has read.
- Open-ended: Adult encourages child to tell what is happening in a picture.
- Wh-: Adult asks "wh" questions about the pictures in the books (i.e., what, where, who, when, why).
- Distancing: Adult relates pictures and works in the book to child's interpretation of what they are seeing and understanding, linking to the child's world.

The DR prompting techniques that are modeled by the adults to initiate discourse, also spiral the literacy learning of young children in accordance with Vygotsky's scaffolding theoretical frameworks in the building of new knowledge.

Training. Two kindergarten teachers, assigned at random, were trained to implement Whitehurst et al. (1988) and Whitehurst and Lonigan's (1992) CROWD's DR

prompting techniques. Training took place during a professional day. Both the researcher and an assigned reading graduate professional trained both teachers simultaneously. The reading professional is a state-certified reading instructor and coach who hold a graduate-level degree from a local university. This coach is designated by the site administrator to assist in studies in the capacities of trainer, mentor, and researcher. For the purpose of this study, the reading professional's role was to assist the researcher in training the two teachers in the experimental group. Additionally, this designated person assisted the researcher by observing teachers in both groups to ensure that DR training was properly implemented by teachers in the experimental group and to document the types of instructional strategies integrated by teachers in the control group.

As part of the training, teachers were first presented with general, broad information about DR, its history, purpose, and effects on vocabulary and reading comprehension as demonstrated in the research. Then, the teachers watched the Dialogic Reading Curriculum, Read Together, Talk Together (RTTT; Whitehurst, 2002) training video that demonstrated the use of dialogic reading techniques with small groups of children. Teachers were asked to provide feedback about what they noticed during the video and how they felt they could use it in their classroom. Teachers then had an opportunity to role play the presented prompting questions and techniques for as long as necessary. The researcher and reading graduate professional guided the teachers through providing feedback and answered any questions the teachers had.

The criteria utilized to ensure the teachers in the experimental groups were sufficiently trained included: (a) teachers evidenced utilizing the trained ways to introduce the stories, author and build student interest in the story during the role play

sessions, (b) both teachers had to demonstrate the use of open ended questions in all categories of the CONNECT form during the role play demonstration, (c) teachers needed to exhibit knowledge of how to implement the both the CROWD and PEER techniques (Appendix B) during the role play scenario, and (d) the assisting reading professional and the researcher concurred that teachers were proficient in the use of DR discourse strategies after assessing their role play scenarios and strategy application on the training CONNECT form.

Implementation. For the experimental group, eight books were selected by the researcher based on grade-appropriateness, vocabulary richness, length, plot complexity, story elements, and illustrations read aloud by the teacher each week during the course of an eight-week period (Appendix C). All books were representative of what is read in the classroom and selected from the RTTT reading list developed at the State University of New York at Stony Brook for the seminal study research frameworks (Arnold et al., 1994; Whitehurst, 1988, 2002). Additionally, the specific books were chosen for displaying the following traits: colorful, including potentially new vocabulary text, story length, and audience age range (Hargrave & Senechal, 2000). The vocabulary used for instructional purpose in the experimental group was delineated and recommended for instruction in the RTTT vocabulary lists (Appendices D-K).

Both experimental group teachers read the selected stories (Appendix B) and selected their vocabulary from these stories for their instructional lessons and presented in the RTTT materials. These vocabulary words totaled ten words per week, per story. The rationale for using the words in the story is so that students could become familiar with the language and possibly be able to dialogue utilizing the presented vocabulary.

Teachers were instructed to read the story to a group of six students (maximum) at a time, utilizing the CROWD strategies they had been trained to implement. Students were heterogeneously grouped so that students who fell behind might learn from other students who are less at risk. Teachers assessed students on a weekly basis on vocabulary knowledge and usage.

Fidelity. The researcher and the graduate level reading professional observed teachers' implementation of the DR discourse every week for a period of eight sessions and noted prompting instruction techniques on the CONNECT form. The Dialogic Reading Observation CONNECT Form (Appendix A) was the tool utilized to monitor the application of the trained teachers in their implementation of DR discourse strategies. Specifically, direct observations were made by the researcher and the designated graduate level reading professional on a weekly basis over the eight week intervention period, for a total of eight observations. Exact times of observations were determined by the researcher and the graduate student prior to the start of the study. Observations varied throughout the week from the first day the teacher introduced and read the story aloud to the group to later in the week when the children were more familiar with the story.

The CONNECT form tool is aligned with the DR videotape teacher training that was utilized prior to implementation. The observers looked for the integration of questions by the teachers in the experimental group to initiate student discourse group according to the DR techniques and format. For example, on the CONNECT form the observers documented if teachers asked questions to build children's interest, check to see if teachers prompted students to discourse by asking children to complete sentences, having them recall information, integrating open-ended questions, posing who, what,

when, where, or why questions, and verbally helped children to make connections between the read text and real life scenarios (Winton et al., 2010). Discourse prompting questions observed were aligned with the DR discourse techniques known as completion, recall, open-ended, wh- questions, and distancing (CROWD; Whitehurst et al., 1988) through teachers' instructional strategies - prompt, evaluation, expansion, and repetition (PEER; Whitehurst, 2009) (Appendix B) . The two DR trained teachers did not deviate from the DR prompting format and there was no need to re-direct them to the training and the CONNECT form questions for a training refresher.

Comparison group. Two teachers in the comparison group were not trained in DR discourse strategies. They continued to self-select stories for the week based on Houghton-Mifflin story instruction pacing guide and located in the resource basal. Teachers in these groups were not trained, nor given guidance on how to conduct vocabulary instruction in their read-aloud and small group reading sessions. However, teachers in this group were observed by both the research and the reading professional on a weekly basis with the CONNECT form, in order to document the type of instructional dialogue initiated by the untrained teacher during the reading instruction. The observation form was also utilized to document DR discourse strategies that may have been initiated by untrained teachers during the shared storybook reading sessions.

Data Analysis

A quasi-experimental design was most appropriate for this study because it allowed for the inquiry questions to be answered when the groups' random assignment is not possible (Creswell, 2002; Newman et al., 2006). The study used intact groups of the students assigned to the participating four classroom teachers. Random selection of

student groups was not possible, thus the study's design was quasi-experimental. The researcher used a pretest-posttest collection method. The quasi-experimental design allowed for the comparison of students' scores to determine if the teachers who were trained to engage in DR discourse treatment had a greater effect on the reading and vocabulary scores of the children than did the control group teachers.

The study used two analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) on the vocabulary and comprehension scores of the FAIR and SAT-10. The first ANCOVA compared the FAIR posttest vocabulary mean score of the experimental group, which received DR discourse strategies as implemented by trained teachers, to the FAIR posttest vocabulary mean score of the control group, who received instruction according to the traditional reading instruction strategies, while controlling for pre-existing vocabulary levels using the scores on the FAIR. The second ANCOVA compared the SAT-10 reading comprehension mean score of the experimental group, who received DR discourse strategies as implemented by trained teachers, to the SAT-10 reading comprehension mean score of the control group, who received instruction according to the traditional reading instruction strategies, while controlling for the pre-existing comprehension levels using scores on the FAIR. Pre-analyses were conducted to determine whether resulting regression lines displayed homogeneity of slope. In order to test these assumptions, a significance level of $p < .05$ was set a priori. The statistical analyses of all of the collected data were computed utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 21st edition (SPSS).

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The posttest mean vocabulary score adjusted for the vocabulary pretest scores of Hispanic ELs, as measured by the FAIR, whose teachers were trained to utilize DR discourse strategies will be higher than the adjusted posttest mean vocabulary score of Hispanic ELs whose teachers have not been trained to utilize DR discourse strategies.

Hypothesis 2: The posttest mean comprehension score adjusted for the comprehension scores of Hispanic ELs whose teachers have been trained to utilize DR discourse strategies will be higher than the adjusted posttest mean comprehension score of Hispanic ELs whose teachers have not been trained to utilize DR discourse strategies.

Design Validity

Internal Validity

This term refers to the fact that there are no internal errors surrounding the research project (Neuman, 2000). In the case of this study, the independent variables surrounding dialogic techniques treatment integrated by the DR trained teachers to have ELs engage in discourse during the storybook reading sessions were hypothesized to have had an effect on vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension score gains. Threats to the internal validity included teachers deviating from the training techniques. Teachers in the DR group may have chosen not to implement DR in their classrooms. Likewise, teachers who were not DR trained could have integrated some type of dialogue with their students during the storybook reading sessions.

External Validity

This study's external validity is its extent to which the "study can be generalizable to other people, groups, and investigations" (Newman et al., 2006, p. 222). Generalizations from this research include the sampled population being Hispanic, Kindergarten ELs students in a low-socioeconomic, urban public school. Findings could be replicable using different population, grade levels, and school settings, but not necessarily generalizable to populations other than the demographics of the population in the current study.

Summary

The design of this study was grounded in the theoretical frameworks set forth by all Dialogic Reading seminal research first presented by Whitehurst (1988) and Lonigan (1994). The researcher sought to expand the existing literature and studies by extracting the essence from the original works and including a population and grade level that had never been observed in reviewed studies. This quasi-experimental, quantitative study included 100% Hispanic ELs. Additionally, the cognitive frameworks were supported by Vygotsky's sociocultural theories which states that dialogue is best learned when scaffolded by the adults. In observing the teachers and noting the CONNECT form with the DR trained teachers' of usage of DR discourse, the level of scaffolding techniques in support of literacy skills development by the adults were observed.

Hickman et al. (2004) emphasizes the importance of scaffolding in the instruction of ELs during the storybook reading sessions. The adult supports the learning of new vocabulary and the comprehension of the story through the adult's guidance and prompting of the discussions. During the reading sessions, the learners become the

"retellers" of the story and the adults elicit information about the story where the child needed to make inferences. Finally, they delineated that while dialogue is inherent to scaffolding by the adult, it should be done actively and mainly by the child. This inquiry was supported by Whitehurst's (1988) prior research where in dialogic reading discourse, the adult becomes facilitator and the child becomes the storyteller. It was also aligned with Vygostky's cognitive theory that stresses that children construct their own knowledge when they socially engage in sharing what they know with others.

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the methods and research design that were utilized to determine if reading performance scores were higher for Hispanic Kindergarten ELs' reading skills when teachers integrated DR discourse into the language arts and reading instructional block.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents the data analysis results from the conducted study in several parts. In the first two sections, the results for research question one is presented. It is followed by the data for research question two. The third part presents the observable data that was part of the study to validate fidelity to training and to record in-classroom instructional strategies for both DR discourse trained teachers and untrained teachers. All observations were documented on the CONNECT observation form by the researcher and the graduate level reading professional. For research question one, the DR discourse treatment was the between subjects independent variable of vocabulary raw score as measured by FAIR (dependent variable). For research question two, the DR treatment was the between subjects as the independent variable with the reading comprehension raw scores as measured by SAT-10 reading comprehension as the dependent variable. Pre-analyses were conducted to determine whether interaction between groups was evidenced and to evaluate whether the dependent variables were statistically the same for all groups. In order to test these assumptions, a significance level of $p < .05$ was set a priori. For both questions, analyses were conducted using SPSS Statistics 21 (2012). All results for both vocabulary and reading comprehension reported from analyses conducted are the raw mean scores rather than standardized scores since standardized scores may have restricted the specificity of the growth over a period of time.

Research Question One

Are the mean vocabulary scores of Hispanic ELs whose teachers have been trained to utilize DR discourse higher than the mean vocabulary scores of Hispanic ELs whose teachers have not been trained to utilize DR discourse strategies?

One of the goals of this study was to review whether the vocabulary of Hispanic Kindergarten ELs was higher for students receiving instruction form a DR discourse trained teacher than the vocabulary of students who received instruction via traditional methods by teachers not trained to use DR discourse strategies. In order to accurately answer this question, first, a test of the homogeneity of-slope assumptions was used to determine if the slopes (between pre-test and post-test scores of the two groups) were homogeneous. Subsequently, an Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to evaluate whether the FAIR posttest vocabulary mean score of the experimental group, which received DR discourse strategies as implemented by trained teachers, was significantly higher than the FAIR posttest vocabulary mean score of the control group, who received instruction according to the traditional reading instruction strategies. Pretest vocabulary scores on the FAIR assessment were used as a control variable.

Homogeneity

Prior to conducting the analyses, the homogeneity-of-slopes assumption was tested to evaluate whether the variance among the dependent variables was the same across the groups. The interaction source was labeled Group2*FAIR_RAW. Results indicated a non-significant interaction, F (1, 59) = .93, p = .34, partial η^2= 7.29, suggesting similar amount of variance between the two groups. Given the failure to reject the null, since there is not interaction ($p > .05$), we continue to assume the null is true.

Descriptive Analysis

Using SPSS Statistics 21 (2012), analyses, item means, and standards deviations for vocabulary scores were calculated. At posttest, the mean for the experimental DR trained group was 12.03 (4.58). This suggests that the Kindergarten ELs outperformed those in the control group whose mean score was 6.81 (3.83). Improvement in the experimental group was 5.22 points from pretest to posttest. These results appear to suggest children in the DR group outperformed the children not in the DR group. Descriptive statistics for vocabulary for both groups are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Posttest Means and Standard Deviations of Vocabulary Scores of Children Receiving Instruction from DR Trained versus Untrained DR Teachers

	Vocabulary Scores		
Condition	*N*	*M*	*(SD)*
DR Untrained	31	6.81	(3.83)
DR Trained	32	12.03	(4.58)
Study Total	63	9.46	(4.95)

Main Effects and the Covariate

A univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to determine the effects of the DR discourse post treatment intervention on vocabulary scores, after controlling for the pre-intervention vocabulary scores. Significant differences were found for the main effect of vocabulary for children who received DR discourse trained treatment. This difference indicated the vocabulary scores of children in DR instructional

conditions were significantly higher than those children who were not. Those participants who received instruction under DR trained teacher treatment had greater vocabulary gains than those students who were in the control group of DR untrained teachers.

Results indicated significant effects of the treatment in the area of vocabulary. Results for the main effects F (1, 60) = 16.11, p = <.001, partial η^2= .212. While effect size is moderate, the hypothesis needs to be rejected to avoid a Type I error (.000 < .05). It was evidenced that 21% of differences was due to the different group the students belonged, the *DR* discourse trained group over the untrained DR discourse group.

Estimates of Adjusted Means

In the area of vocabulary, the results for the control group, when adjusted for the covariate (FAIR_RAW), the mean FAIR2_RAW obtained by participants not using dialogic reading was 7.986 with a standard deviation of .501. The standard error of the FAIR2_RAW scores was .501. The 95% confidence interval indicated that if this this study was run on another sample from the original population, there is a 95% chance that the adjusted mean for the no dialogic reading group would be between 6.985 and8.987. For the experimental group, the adjusted means results evidenced that when adjusted for the covariate (FAIR_RAW), the mean FAIR2_RAW obtained by participants using dialogic reading was 10.889 with a standard deviation of .492. The standard error of the scores FAIR2_RAW was .492. The 95% confidence interval indicated that if this study was run on another sample from the original population, there is a 95% chance that the adjusted mean for the trained dialogic reading group would be between 9.904 and 11.873. The adjusted means results in area of vocabulary are demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Estimates of Adjusted Mean on Vocabulary

Condition	*M*	*(SE)*	95% Confidence Interval	
			LL	UL
No DR Trained	7.986	(.501)	6.985	8.987
DR Trained	10.889	(.492)	9.904	11.873

Research Question Two

Are the mean comprehension scores of Hispanic ELs whose teachers have been trained to utilize DR discourse strategies higher than the mean comprehension scores of Hispanic ELs of teachers who have not been trained to utilize DR discourse strategies?

A subsequent goal of this study was to determine whether DR discourse trained teacher strategies would yield a higher effect on the reading comprehension of Hispanic Kindergarten ELs than those students who received instruction via traditional methods by teachers not trained to use DR discourse strategies. A second ANCOVA compared the SAT-10 reading comprehension mean score of the experimental group, which received DR discourse strategies as implemented by trained teachers, to the SAT-10 reading comprehension mean score of the control group, which received instruction according to traditional reading instruction strategies, while controlling for the pretest comprehension scores on the archived FAIR pre-test.

Homogeneity

Prior to conducting the analyses, a homogeneity-of-slopes assumption was conducted to evaluate whether the variance among the dependent variables was the same across the groups. The test for homogeneity indicated no interaction between the two groups- DR trained versus DR untrained. The lack of interaction suggests the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups. The interaction source was labeled Group2*FAIR_COMP. The results suggest the interaction was not significant, F (1, 59) = 1.38, p = .24 partial η^2= 31.87.

Descriptive Analysis

Just as for research question one, *SPSS Statistics 21* (2012) was utilized to calculate and analyze item means and standards deviations for reading comprehension scores. The mean of 18.58 (6.41) for the experimental DR trained group suggests that Kindergarten ELs outperformed those in the control group whose mean score was 23.34 (4.96). Improvement in the experimental group was 4.76 points. These results further suggest that being part of the DR discourse trained group made a difference for Kindergarten ELs' reading comprehension overall gains. The descriptive statistics for DR discourse trained children and the DR discourse not trained group is demonstrated in Table 4.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations DR Trained versus Untrained DR for Comprehension

	Reading Comprehension Scores		
Condition	*N*	*M*	*(SD)*
DR Untrained	31	18.58	(6.41)
DR Trained	32	23.34	(4.96)
Study Total	63	21.00	(6.16)

Main Effect and the Covariate

In the absence of a two-way interaction, the presence of main effects is examined. A univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to determine the significance of DR discourse treatment on the children's reading comprehension mean scores. Consistent with the analysis for research question one, significant differences were found for the main effect for reading comprehension for the DR trained instructional treatment. Results for the main effects F (1, 60) =6.58, p =.013, partial η^2 = .099. Although the effect size was moderate, the null needs to be rejected to avoid a Type I error (.000 < .05). It was evidenced that 10% of the reading comprehension score differences was due to the group the students belonged to- DR discourse trained teachers or those who were untrained. One must reject the reject the null hypothesis that the population means of the two groups are equal. In this case the significance is .013, which was less than p =.05. Therefore, if the null is rejected, there would be a 1.3% chance that a type I error would be made.

Estimates of Adjusted Means

The results for the control group, when adjusted for the covariate (FAIR_comp), the mean SAT_RAW obtained by participants not using dialogic reading was 19.000 with a standard deviation of 1.057. The standard error of the SAT_RAW scores was 1.057. the 95% confidence interval indicated that if this this study was run on another sample from the original population, there is a 95% chance that the adjusted mean for the no dialogic reading group would be between 16.885 and 21.114. For the experimental group, the adjusted means results evidenced that when adjusted for the covariate (FAIR_comp), the mean SAT_RAW obtained by participants using dialogic reading was 22.938 with a standard deviation of 1.039. The standard error of the SAT_RAW scores was 1.039. The 95% confidence interval indicated that if this this study was run on another sample from the original population, there is a 95% chance that the adjusted mean for the trained dialogic reading group would be between 20.859 and 25.016. The adjusted means results are denoted in Table 5.

Table 5: Estimates of Adjusted Mean on Reading Comprehension

Condition	*M*	*(SE)*	95% Confidence Interval	
			LL	UL
No DR Trained	19.000	(1.057)	16.985	21.114
DR Trained	22.938	(1.039)	20.859	25.016

Observable Data

In order to document and evaluate the effects of the DR discourse strategies, DR discourse trained teachers were observed on a weekly basis for a period of eight weeks and untrained DR discourse teachers four times during the same timeframe by the researcher and a graduate-level reading professional. A total of 16 observations documented the trained teachers' fidelity to the study and training. Eight observations evidenced the instructional practices to teach vocabulary and reading comprehension on the same form for the untrained teachers.

Observational data collected during the study's frame revealed several facts. The data demonstrated that teachers were reading books to the children and instructing them on vocabulary. The variations that existed were due to the reading frameworks protocol they were following. First, the DR discourse teachers who had been trained during a one day professional day by watching the videotape, role-playing, and collaborative planning followed the DR discourse protocol as delineated by *Read Together Talk Together* (Whitehurst, 2012) training and as documented on the CONNECT observation form. Second, teachers in both groups conducted reading instruction in small groups of six students. The following is analysis of the four observed teachers, DR trained teacher one and two, and the DR untrained teachers one and two.

DR Trained Teachers

The results documented on the DR observation form demonstrated that both teachers followed the training protocol in the instruction of reading. These findings were collaboratively observed by the researcher and graduate level reading professional. Findings from these instructional observations revealed several parts. First, teachers

consistently introduced the books and completed an initial picture work of the title, author, and illustrator of the book in order to obtain students' interest in the reading. Both teachers spent a lot of time building excitement prior to reading the text. Next, the use of prompting students through open ended questions was evident. The teachers prompted the children through different types of questioning techniques – completion, recall, open-ended, "wh-", and distancing (CROWD; Whitehurst, Falco et al., 1988). For example, in the case of prompting the child to complete sentences, the teacher stated, "this little pig he is going to do_____; or an example wh questions, "why do you think that the other pig told him not to do that? Both DR trained teachers modeled the text vocabulary and when the children utilized the language, they consistently integrated a lot of positive reinforcement, such as "wonderful word" and building on the children's phrases in order to expand on the vocabulary and discourse.

Another observed item was the consistency in asking distancing questions about feelings and ideas presented in each of the weekly books so that the children easily experienced how the read text was connected in some ways to their own lives and culture. This type of questioning was observed consistently throughout all the book readings. Another vivid example, during the reading of the book title, Corduroy, teacher vividly had children make connections with the character's care for the bear just as their moms cared for them in their lives. In addition, teachers did model reading from the "Big Book" to the students but often students jumped in and read as each had a small version of the book in their hand.

DR Untrained Teachers

The outcomes detailed by both the researcher and the graduate-level reading professional on the Dialogic Reading observation form pinpointed the traditional instructional methods followed by both DR untrained teachers in the teaching of reading skills to Hispanic ELs. It was observed that both teachers spent a considerable amount of time of going over vocabulary pronunciation and associating the pictorial representations of the words prior to introducing the stories. Teachers used vocabulary words to build children's interest in the story. Additionally, teachers spent considerable time on phonetic-based instruction. Another noticeable item was the fact that questions relating to the story were of low-level nature where students could point or provide one word answers. Additionally most of the questions directed at the children were story elements in nature. For example, "who was the character?" or "where does the story take place?" Although they were phrased with "wh" beginnings, the questions did not often prompt the children to dialogue or engage in talk about the story. It was noted that teachers did not pose questions to the children that would allow them make connections between the read text and their personal lives.

Instruction within the untrained teacher groups followed the suggested school district frameworks in the teaching of literacy skills. The books and associated vocabulary were followed according to the weekly pacing guides. There was fidelity to the district's reading program.

Concluding Remarks

Based upon prior research that evidenced the benefits of dialogic reading discourse with children in the development of language, vocabulary, and understanding

of text, (Lonigan et al., 1999; Whitehurst, Arnold et al., 1994; Whitehurst, Epstein et al., 1994) for the purpose of this study, the effects of the technique on vocabulary and reading comprehension skills were explored. In summary, it should be noted, children in both treatments demonstrated gains from the instruction they received. The Kindergarten students made higher gains in the DR trained groups in both vocabulary and in reading comprehension. Group participation made a difference as there was differential effect evidenced for those students belonging to DR trained teacher group.

For research question one, it was hypothesized that posttest mean vocabulary scores of Hispanic ELs, as measured by the FAIR, whose teachers had been trained to utilize DR discourse strategies would be higher than the posttest mean vocabulary scores of Hispanic ELs whose teachers who had been trained to utilize DR discourse strategies. The statistical results evidenced that vocabulary gains for the experimental group were higher than those children in the comparison group.

For research question two it was hypothesized that posttest mean comprehension scores of Hispanic ELs whose teachers had been trained to utilize DR discourse strategies would be higher, when accounting for pretest mean comprehension scores than the posttest mean comprehension scores of Hispanic ELs of teachers who had not been trained to utilize DR discourse strategies. The statistical results demonstrated that the DR discourse trained teacher groups made greater grains in the reading comprehension posttest scores.

Observed teachers in both the experimental and control group instructed the students in a fashion that was conducive to fostering the development of Kindergarten ELs' vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. However, the materials and

questioning depth of instruction between the two groups differed. The DR trained teachers consistently prompted the children to think and dialogue about the text using language from the books. Student engagement with text and discourse flowed openly. On the other hand, the untrained teachers focused more on being able to read stories without having children engage in dialogue about the content. Another noted comparison was that although teachers in both groups instructed in a small group fashion, in the untrained teacher group, only the teacher had a copy of the read book. In comparison, each children and the teacher in the DR trained group held the books in their hands which allowed the children to jump-in and read. DR discourse trained teachers followed the training protocol and utilized the *Read Together Talk Together* (RTTT) (Whitehurst, 2002), according to Whitehurst (1992) and Lonigan (1992) with fidelity.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study sought to expand our knowledge if the use of DR discourse impacted the literacy skills development of Kindergarten ELs in a low-socioeconomic, urban area. More specifically, it focused on the effects DR had on the vocabulary development and reading comprehension skills of Hispanic Kindergarten ELs. The results suggested by this study generated three significant findings. The first, there was a significant effect of vocabulary scores of children who were in the DR discourse trained group. The second, there was significant effect on the reading comprehension scores of students in the treatment group where children were instructed by DR discourse trained teachers. The third finding suggested that although there was no interaction between groups, both groups made gains in both areas of the study's research. The findings surrounding DR are aligned with the evidences presented by the seminal studies of Whitehurst (1988) and Whitehurst & Lonigan (1992), yet differs from their work as this study was conducted in a formal school setting rather than in pre-school and daycare programs.

Past research suggests that young children benefit in the development of literacy skills from reading storybooks. Findings from shared reading studies where interventions targeted language development, vocabulary knowledge, and reading comprehension skills, evidenced an improvement in children's literacy skills (Senechal et al., 1998). Thus, this study was undertaken to see what outcomes would result by conducting the study with a Hispanic ELs population in an urban city school.

This chapter consists of several parts. In the first section, Vygotsky's theoretical frameworks are re-visited to highlight the manner in which DR instructional strategies are

supported by his works and theories. Next, the effects of the DR discourse treatment on children's vocabulary knowledge development and reading comprehension are reviewed. Additionally, the observed strategies for both the experimental and the control group as noted by the researcher and the reading professional on the CONNECT form are presented. Finally, a review on the importance of findings, limitations, and implications for future research are delineated.

Theoretical Frameworks

Vygotsky's (1978) theories paved the way for research studies in DR to demonstrate positive outcomes in the development of language skills. The foundation for his works established the notion that children construct knowledge through social interactions. Dialogic discourses within a shared reading experience can be conducive to the development of reading skills in young ELs because language, Vygotsky asserted, is the tool which mediates the manner and ways that these social interactions occur. In the academic setting, young ELs come to Kindergarten with minimal (if any) knowledge of English. From observing the instructional activities that took place within the experimental group, it was noted that while dialoguing about the text, these young children would interject some words in their home language (Spanish) in order to better express themselves or to further advance their understanding of what was being read. Through modeling and scaffolding the teachers would expand on words used by the children. The questioning and prompting was a mediating tool to develop the children's thinking and learning as documented in the study's CONNECT form. Children in the experimental group demonstrated higher scores in both vocabulary knowledge and understanding of what was read.

One interesting finding from this study was how both teachers and researcher gained insight as to Vygotsky's idea of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) in the instruction of reading in the classroom through DR discourse. Teachers in the experimental group prompted children to dialogue via questions that forced the children to expand and elaborate their thinking about the text. As time transpired, towards the last observation, it was noticeable in their interactions that students were becoming more independent in their verbalizations and oral language expressions. They demonstrated a stronger control in language use and they were expressing themselves in complete sentences. On the other hand, the teachers in the control group curtailed some of the students' dialogue and think-aloud expressions by the instructional approaches they integrated in the teaching of reading. The teachers in the experimental group applied reading and vocabulary development training in guiding the children's discourse. It was through this support and total engagement that these students seemed to outperform the children in the comparison group. Thus, the role of the teacher in the school setting is important in the development of ELs' skills through the use of DR discourse. This experience allowed the teacher to scaffold the children's literacy skills' learning. By doing so, the teachers prompted the children to use language and oral recounts in the creation of new vocabulary knowledge.

DR Discourse Effects

The results for the experimental group in this study were positive. Its outcomes accentuated the need for teachers to continue providing assistance to ELs as they develop language skills, oral recounts, vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, and

reasoning skills. DR discourse strategies provided such platform for ELs and their reading teachers as the overall results were higher for those Kindergarten children.

Vocabulary Growth

While both groups in the experimental and control group demonstrated vocabulary growth, those children in the DR discourse trained group had greater gains than those who were in the untrained groups. Both groups including those children who were not instructed by DR trained teachers also made gains. However, a gain of 5.22 points, further showed that being part of the DR discourse trained group made a difference for Kindergarten ELs' vocabulary growth. When all analyses were conducted, the comparison for both groups indicated that although the percentage difference between the two was not vast, it was adequate and significant. This finding led the researcher to draw several conclusions. First, in addition to the reading of the weekly stories, all Kindergarten children received explicit reading instruction that honed specifically on alphabetic principles, phonetic-based lessons, vocabulary development, and comprehension of text as prescribed by the school's reading instruction frameworks. These extra instructional activities would be a conductor towards the development of all ELs' vocabulary growth. Next, the use of small, as well as, whole class groups was utilized by all teachers particularly outside the observed instructional time. Both trained and untrained teachers resorted to grouping students based on their instructional needs and learning aptitudes. In many instances, language learners received additional reading instruction by a remedial instructor in small groups and outside the language arts and reading block. These factors may have reduced the differences in gains for the DR untrained control group.

Past research which states that reading picture books combined with instructional guidance and instruction supported the findings of the study. Researchers in their past work found that DR interventions helped children's language and vocabulary skills when children's spontaneous verbalizations were prompted by an adult during the reading of a story (Whitehurst and Valdez-Menchaca, 1992). The same was evident for this study. The results indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group in both vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension scores.

Within the reading realm, my work has also demonstrated the benefits of dialoguing about text and how it is conducive to increases in vocabulary, and comprehension scores in young Hispanic ELs. While my study's results is supported by the reviewed research studies (Valdez –Menchaca & Whitehurst, 1992; Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Collins, 2004), it also adds to reading research's base. Teachers can use of DR discourse strategies to prompt Hispanic ELs to talk about the stories read, to use vocabulary from the stories, and to allow children to make connections with what is read. By doing so, they will afford children opportunities to engage in conversations that build new vocabulary and create understanding of what is read.

It was noted from the findings and from the observable data documented on the CONNECT form that DR trained teachers made an effort to follow the DR questioning techniques. For example, in one instance, part of the oral discourse entailed the children talking to the teacher using words from the story. Discussions took place about word meanings during the oral dialogue. This interactive dialogue indicated to the researcher that construction of new word meanings was taking place. From the findings of this

study, reading stories and the talking about those stories with guidance from the teacher (or adult) enhanced the vocabulary growth of Kindergarten ELs.

Reading Comprehension

The integration of DR discourse techniques was able to provide language and vocabulary experiences for ELs where they dialogued, asked questions, read books, and shared oral recounts. In this study, a significant effect was obtained from these ELs' comprehension of read text. It is evident from the observable data and the analysis that students who participated in the DR discourse group had a gain of 4.76 points. While the researcher anticipated greater gains, one factor that could have contributed to the small difference between the two groups is that as new vocabulary is acquired and learned, children become more adept in understanding what is read. For example, low level ELs were learning more new words in English that those children that had knowledge of vocabulary words in English. Thus, with the acquisition of new words children's reading comprehension in English improved. The greater gains in understanding what was read, however, were made by the DR discourse trained group.

Past inquiries on the effects of storybook reading on young children emphasize book reading experiences is an important element in the development of oral language, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension. (Senechal, 1997; Whitehurst and Valdez-Menchaca, 1992) The findings from this study continue to support those outcomes. This study set itself apart from those existing in the field is that it took place in Kindergarten and with self-identified Hispanic ELs. This factor is an added element to the existing body of research in the area of reading comprehension and language learners.

The notion that reading aloud to children is an instructional activity that is conducive to understanding what is read in the building of knowledge and in developing comprehension skills has been long established (Collins, 2004). Findings from this study also demonstrated the use of shared picture book readings and DR discourse techniques had positive effects in accelerating vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension of young Hispanic ELs who participated in the study.

Discourse Observations

Observed teachers in both the experimental and control group instructed the students in a fashion that was conducive to fostering the development of Kindergarten ELs' vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. However, the materials and questioning depth of instruction between the two groups differed. The DR trained teachers consistently prompted the children to think and dialogue about the text using language from the books. On the other hand, the untrained teachers focused more on being able to read stories without having children engage in dialogue about the content. Another noted comparison is that although teachers in both groups instructed in a small group fashion, within the untrained teacher group, only the teacher had a copy of the big book.

Another aspect of the instruction observed within the experimental group was the consistency of the teacher in asking questions about feelings and ideas presented in each of the books. From this strategy, the children could experience how the read text was connected in some ways to their own lives and culture. This questioning was an important factor which led students to interact and dialogue about the stories in the creation of new words. On the other hand, untrained teachers' questioning was more

pragmatic and explicit in literacy skills reinforcement. When the children could make connections to their own lives from the narratives, the children would become more expressive and eager to share their oral recounts.

Importance of Findings for Research and Practice

Young ELs' limited vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension when they first begin formal schooling continue to be the center of researchers and educators' focus. Findings from this study can be a catalyst for literacy instructional change in several ways. First, evidenced score gains in both vocabulary and reading comprehension indicated that integrating DR discourse is a viable tool for Hispanic ELs' vocabulary knowledge to be accelerated and enhanced. Another important finding is that when teachers (adults) scaffold children's learning by posing higher thinking questions, (wh's type questions) they positively affect both vocabulary levels and comprehension of text of the learners. Furthermore, by allowing children to dialogue and to make connections between read text and what is familiar to them, students' understandings is developed.

The findings of this study showed that vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension of Hispanic ELs were positively affected by the teachers' inclusion of dialogue about content and vocabulary during storybook reading. Additionally, although both groups made gains, the DR discourse trained teachers had greater gains in mean scores. Thus, DR discourse strategies can be included during storybook reading sessions in order to foster the development of ELs' language, vocabulary, and comprehension skills in English.

In summary, this study will add to the field of reading research the effectiveness of DR discourse when ELs dialogue about read stories in the building of vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension.

Limitations of the Present Study

While the study took place with self-identified Hispanic, Kindergarten ELs enrolled in an urban school, a primary limitation was the lack of consistency of the ELs language level conditions across the four teacher classrooms. The initial placement of the children by the school registrar placed children with varied English language levels in each of the classes in each grade level including Kindergarten. The different language levels within each of the study's participating classrooms did not allow for the gains to be correlated to the specific ELs' language levels. While the lower level ELs began with limited or non-existing knowledge of English, at what point in the learning curve did they begin to narrow the gap and minimize the differential points between the two groups in the acquisition of vocabulary and understanding what was read?

Another limitation to the study was its short time interval when compared to the length of the instructional academic year. The study took place during an 8-week period. Children's data was obtained from archived data from the beginning of the year and compared to the children's performance at the end of the academic year. All four teachers provided literacy skills instruction outside the study's timeframe that could have further impacted the children's literacy learning.

While the limitations did not detract from the study's purpose, aims, and findings, they afford the researchers an opportunity to conduct studies in the future that address

these limitations. Areas to be considered should include children's grade levels, ELs language levels, longer study length, and larger sample size.

Implications for Future Research

Future research on DR discourse strategies should be conducted with young children whose English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) levels are all the same and whose knowledge of English is minimal. For example, for this study, since students were initially randomly assigned to the kindergarten teachers by the school registrar, the English language levels ranged from one to five (five being the highest) across the four classrooms. Although some of the classes had more ESOL level ones and two's than the others, the language levels of the participants were mixed within each of the teacher classrooms. One of the reasons these classroom demographics transpire at the school site is due to the fact that all Kindergarten teachers are ESOL endorsed and they have the required state certification to have all ESOL levels of students in the classroom. Additionally, classes were created to include mixed-ability, heterogeneous groups. While the DR discourse trained group made the greater gains in both vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension, both groups made gains from the initial starting points. Furthermore, when a comparison was made of the point difference between the two groups, the point margin spread in vocabulary and reading comprehension gain was not as great as had been anticipated by the researcher. For a future study, the level of the children's English language levels should be the same in each of the classrooms. For example, researchers should conduct the same study with exclusively ESOL level one students or only level two students whose knowledge of English is minimal and where the home language is still the main thrust for language development and literacy skills

acquisition. Such a study would provide a more effective approach to determine if DR discourse strategies would be a viable teaching tool for young ELs.

Another opportunity for future researchers is to conduct experimental studies to determine at what point young children with minimal English vocabulary knowledge make learning gains. For example, in this study, the entry vocabulary level of students as evidenced on the archived FAIR assessment demonstrated that while those low level students did not outperform the children in the experimental level, they did make considerable gains from the initial archived pre-test results. The starting levels for many of the ELs were noticeable lower than some of their peers across the four classrooms, yet, at some point in the learning curve both groups advanced in the acquisition of new words.

Future directions for the area of reading comprehension studies need to expand in the reciprocity of reading and writing as an instructional tool. In hindsight, this study's frameworks did not expand on the children's oral recounts by having them also express themselves in narrative form. In the acquisition of new words, children take ownership of these words when they hear them, read them, say them, and ultimately write them. It is then that they truly assimilate the new language's vocabulary in the building of reading comprehension.

Finally, this research could be expanded by extending the time duration, including other grade levels, integrating other resources, and increasing the sample size. A longitudinal study where the Hispanic ELs' performance could be tracked for a longer period of time would provide insight as to when children's language and reading levels change. Additionally, it would allow for gauging the sustainability of the intervention when implemented for longer than an 8-week timeframe.

Concluding Remarks

This study explored theoretical and classroom applications of an underexplored and underutilized strategy in today's learning setting, the use of DR discourse to develop young language learners' new vocabulary and to understand the text being read. The aim for this study was to explore whether DR discourse may be an effective technique to teach literacy skills to young primary language learners so that practitioners would be able to utilize this information to improve teaching and learning for the instruction of ELs in schools.

The statistical results demonstrated that the DR discourse trained teacher groups made greater gains in the reading comprehension posttest scores. From this, one can surmise that targeting specific English vocabulary words during the reading aloud sessions can have significant effects on the literacy skills of young ELs. More importantly, findings substantiated the hypothesis that targeting the vocabulary growth of ELs through storybook readings and discussions was conducive to gains in vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension scores of Hispanic Kindergarten ELs.

This study's findings provided findings that asking children open-ended questions during the book reading and having them engage in dialogue about what is read is beneficial to children who differ in word knowledge as it may be the case of non-English speaking learners. Results demonstrated the children learned new words and began to formulate understanding of text in the development of reading comprehension skills.

To conclude, in the words stated by Durkin (1966) a child's reading skills can be nurtured and fostered but it depends "not only the child's abilities but also on the kind of instruction that is offered" (p. 55). As it was determined from this study's findings, DR

discourse strategies can be integrated as an instructional technique by primary teachers in the instruction of young Hispanic ELs. Thus, teachers would move a step closer of not having to ask, “Why is this child being left behind?” particularly in the case of children whose knowledge of English is limited or non-existent.

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Appendix A

Handout 6.5

CONNECT Form
(http://community.fpg.unc.edu/connect-modules)

Dialogic Reading Observation Form

Introducing the Book	
Title of the Book The reader says the title of the book to the children before beginning the read aloud.	*Circle Yes or No to indicate whether this occurs.* ☐ YES ☐ NO
Author of the Book The reader tells the children who the author of the book is before beginning the read aloud.	*Circle Yes or No to indicate whether this occurs.* ☐ YES ☐ NO
Asks a Question to Build Children's Interest The reader asks the children at least one question before beginning to read the book to build the children's interest in the story. (*Ex: What do you think this book is about?)*	*Circle Yes or No to indicate whether this occurs.* ☐ YES ☐ NO
Make notes about examples of **introducing the book** you observed:	

Handout 6.5

Reading the Book	
*Make a tally mark in the box <u>each time</u> you observe a **CROWD** prompt being used.*	
Completion- The reader creates an incomplete sentence to prompt the children to come up with the appropriate response (i.e. fill-in-the-blank). (Ex:*To open the mailbox Sam will need to use a ___.)*	
Recall- The reader asks a question designed to help children remember key elements of the story (Ex: *Can you remember what happened to Sam and Ellen on the way to the mailbox?*)	
Open-Ended- The reader asks a question or makes a statement that requires children to describe part of the story in their own words beyond just a "yes" or "no" response. (Ex: *Tell me what you think is happening in this picture.)*	
Wh-questions- The reader asks a question about the story that begins with what, where, who, or why. (Ex: *What kind of shoes is Sam wearing?)*	
Distancing- The reader helps children make connections between events that happen in the story to those that occur in their own lives. (Ex: *Sam is big enough to go by herself to get the mail. What do you do all by yourself to help Mom or Dad?*)	
Make notes about examples of **CROWD prompts** you observed:	
*Make a tally mark in the box <u>each time</u> you observe the **PEER** sequence being used.*	
PEER Sequence (**P**rompt-**E**valuation-**E**xpansion-**R**epetition). The reader uses a CROWD prompt, then evaluates and expands on the children's responses, and then repeats the prompt to provide another opportunity for the children to respond. The PEER sequence should always be done in this order.	
Make notes about the **PEER sequences** you observed:	

CONNECT – 2011
http://community.fpg.unc.edu/connect-modules

Appendix B
PEER Sequence and CROWD Prompts
(Whitehurst, 2002)

PEER SEQUENCE

- **P**rompts the child to say something about the book,
- **E**valuates the child's response,
- **E**xpands the child's response by rephrasing and adding information to it, and
- **R**epeats the prompt to make sure the child has learned from the expansion

- **C**ompletion prompts
  Leave a blank at the end of a sentence and get the child to fill it in. These are typically used in books with rhyme or books with repetitive phases. For example, you might say, "I think I'd be a glossy cat. A little plump but not too ____," letting the child fill in the blank with the word *fat*. Completion prompts provide children with information about the structure of language that is critical to later reading.

- **R**ecall prompts
  These are questions about what happened in a book a child has already read. Recall prompts work for nearly everything except alphabet books. For example, you might say, "Can you tell me what happened to the little blue engine in this story?" Recall prompts help children in understanding story plot and in describing sequences of events. Recall prompts can be used not only at the end of a book, but also at the beginning of a book when a child has been read that book before.

- **O**pen-ended prompts
  These prompts focus on the pictures in books. They work best for books that have rich, detailed illustrations. For example, while looking at a page in a book that the child is familiar with, you might say, "Tell me what's happening in this picture." Open-ended prompts help children increase their expressive fluency and attend to detail.

- **W**h- prompts
  These prompts usually begin with what, where, when, why, and how questions. Like open-ended prompts, wh- prompts focus on the pictures in books. For example, you might say, "What's the name of this?" while pointing to an object in the book. Wh-questions teach children new vocabulary.

- **D**istancing prompts
  These ask children to relate the pictures or words in the book they are reading to experiences outside the book. For example, while looking at a book with a picture of animals on a farm, you might say something like, "Remember when we went to the animal park last week. Which of these animals did we see there?" Distancing prompts help children form a bridge between books and the real world, as well as helping with verbal fluency, conversational abilities, and narrative skills.

Appendix C

Read Together Talk Together (RTTT)
(Whitehurst, 2002)
Alphabetical Listing of Book Titles
Six Small Books with Teacher BIG Book

1. *Blueberries for Sal*	Robert McCloskey
2. *Corduroy*	Don Freeman
3. *Cows Can't Fly*	David Milgrim
4. *No Jumping on the Bed*	Tedd Arnold
5. *The Dinosaur in My Backyard*	B. G. Hennesssy
6. *The Quilt Story*	Tony Johnston
7. *The Snowy Day*	Ezra Jack Keats
8. *The Three Little Pigs*	James Marshall

Appendix D

Vocabulary Words
Week 1
Blueberries for Sal

1. pail
2. blueberries
3. fingers
4. trees
5. rock
6. bear
7. hill
8. finding
9. pans
10. jars

Appendix E

Vocabulary Words
Week 2
Corduroy

1. toys
2. store
3. shopping
4. stairs
5. climbing
6. hugging
7. happy
8. sleeping
9. box
10. riding

Appendix F

Vocabulary Words
Week 3
Cows Can't Fly

1. breeze
2. blowing
3. cows
4. flying
5. sidewalk
6. broom
7. garbage
8. clouds
9. giraffe
10. mountains

Appendix G

Vocabulary Words
Week 4
No More Jumping on the Bed

1. jumping
2. pillow
3. blanket
4. toes
5. monster
6. paintbrush
7. sitting
8. ceiling
9. shoes
10. dishes

Appendix H

Vocabulary Words
Week 5
The Dinosaur Who Lived in My Backyard

1. swing
2. hiding
3. backyard
4. leaves
5. kite
6. wishing
7. wagon
8. sandbox
9. eating
10. egg

Appendix I

Vocabulary Words
Week 6
The Quilt Story

1. sewing
2. quilt
3. bows
4. rocking
5. daisy
6. hearts
7. birds
8. basket
9. shawl
10. pigtails

Appendix J

Vocabulary Words
Week 7
The Snowy Day

1. snow
2. sliding
3. snowflakes
4. friend
5. snowman
6. angels
7. snowsuit
8. piles
9. snowy
10. footprints

Appendix K

Vocabulary Words
Week 8
The Three Little Pigs

1. pigs
2. bricks
3. straw
4. ladder
5. huffing
6. puffing
7. fireplace
8. sunflowers
9. shutters
10. sticks

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