EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION IN EXPOSITORY TEXT STRUCTURES WITH SECOND GRADE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Amy Evans-Teaford
B.A. Child Development, California State University, Chico (1985)
B.A. Psychology, California State University, Chico (1985)

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A Thesis

by

Amy Evans-Teaford

Approved by:

__________________________, Committee Chair
Cid Gunston-Parks, Ph.D.

__________________________, Second Reader
Porfirio Loeza, Ph.D.

__________________________
Date

ii
Student: **Amy Evans-Teaford**

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Robert Pritchard, Ph.D., Department Chair  
Department of Teacher Education
Abstract

of

EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION IN EXPOSITORY TEXT STRUCTURES WITH SECOND GRADE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by

Amy Evans-Teaford

Understanding expository text is more difficult than narrative. This is due to multiple text structures and increased difficulty with academic vocabulary and content. Six second grade English Learners participated in this study. Each was able to decode grade level text, but scored at the beginning or early intermediate level on the reading portion of the California English Language Development Test. The 45 minute lessons took place three days a week for seven weeks. They involved explicit instruction of the following expository text structures: description, sequencing, and compare and contrast. Each set of lessons began with a concept development activity to help students fully understand the text structures before text was introduced. In addition, they were taught vocabulary for each text structure and the use of graphic organizers to help organize the information. Moreover, the students were taught paraphrasing through think alouds. A qualitative analysis of the QRI 4, Burke’s Reading Inventory and a text structure identification assessment were used to analyze results. The
outcomes for this study were favorable. Five of the six students increased their performance on the comprehension portion of the QRI. Furthermore, students’ comprehension increased when given an extra scaffold of a Venn diagram. Also noteworthy, these students still comprehended fiction text at a higher level than expository text. These findings support previous findings that students have more difficulty with expository text. The results of this study are consistent with outcomes of previous studies that explicit instruction in comprehension as early as the primary grades is beneficial.

________________________________________, Committee Chair
Cid Gunston-Parks, Ph.D.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

As a primary classroom teacher for 18 years, three of which were as a reading specialist, the author has an observed need for explicit comprehension instruction for developing readers, including those who are English Learners. Even when students are taught to read using a balanced reading approach (emphasis on integrating meaning, structure, and visual cues) some young students appear to perceive the task of reading as accurate decoding of words (Applegate, Applegate, & Modla, 2009). It is probable that this is due to early success resulting from the use of decoding cues; and the difficulty of using meaning and semantic cues as they are in the midpoint of acquiring English Language development (August & Shanahan, 2006).

Statement of Problem

For the past few decades a large amount of research has hypothesized that automaticity and fluency would result in the automatic comprehending of text (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005). However, further research has suggested the need for explicit instruction in comprehension strategies (Pressley, 2000). This is especially true for expository text as it offers more challenges than narrative structure (Dymock, 2005). Young readers often have a distorted conception of what reading is, focusing on word recognition and fluency and not developing high levels of comprehension. (Applegate et al., 2009) These students often become what are termed word callers rather than deep thinkers.
Research Question

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the effects of explicit instruction of different structures of expository texts as well as comprehension strategies. The effect of this treatment was studied to determine if comprehension skills of second grade English Learners would increase due to this instruction. Students were introduced and explicitly taught the structures for compare and contrast, sequencing and description formats of expository texts. In addition, the following strategy was used to encourage students to monitor their reading: think alouds focusing on paraphrasing,

This study attempted to answer the following question: If features and vocabulary for specific text structures were explicitly taught, will English Learner’s expository comprehension improve? In addition, will the use of the following strategies encourage students to monitor their reading: think alouds focusing on paraphrasing, predicting, using known information, and the use of text features? A secondary question was to see if students’ definitions toward reading shifted to a more comprehension focus rather than word calling.

Rationale

As mentioned, during the past few decades an extraordinarily large amount of research has pointed to the need for automaticity and fluency for comprehension to take place. Hudson et al. (2005) suggested that once a reader is freed up from attending to word recognition, attention will be placed toward comprehension. As a result it was concluded that an increase in fluency will lead to increased achievement
in comprehension. However, additional evidence has suggested that an emphasis on fluency does not automatically translate into reading comprehension (Rand Study Group, 2002). Dolores Durkin’s landmark study in 1978 demonstrated that teachers were not explicitly teaching comprehension. Furthermore, a number of students need to be taught explicitly what these strategies are, and how to use them to improve their reading comprehension. This is especially true for English Learners who often score as well as their English speaking peers in spelling and decoding but have increased difficulty in the area of vocabulary and comprehension (August & Shanahan, 2006).

Students need to be aware of the differences between narrative and expository texts. Understanding expository text is much more difficult as there are different text structures children need to be aware of as well as increased difficulty with academic vocabulary and content (Williams, Hall, Lauer, Stafford, deCani 2005). In the primary grades, these text structures include compare/contrast, sequencing, description, cause and effect and problem solution. According to Moss (2004), it is imperative to provide students with the necessary tools to develop understanding for expository texts due to the fact that state standardized tests use expository structures to test students’ comprehension.

Methodology

This study of the effects of explicit instruction of text structures and selected comprehension strategies on students’ comprehension and their personal definition of reading was for the most part qualitative in nature (case study). Six second grade English Learners took part in this study for seven weeks. Students were selected based
on their reading level (accuracy rate very close to or meeting grade level expectations) and CELDT score for reading at the beginning or early intermediate level. The treatment took place Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 2:45 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. after school during the school homework club, which was already an established program. The following assessments were given individually to students as pretests;

1. The Qualitative Reading Inventory, IV, 2005 which included an accuracy rate, retelling of expository passages and answering implicit and explicit questions;
2. an interview using Burke’s Reading Inventory of the Reading Process; and
3. a short assessment in which students were asked to identify text structures.

Students took part in a seven week treatment. Each 45 minute lesson was videotaped and then analyzed for learning outcomes. At the end of the treatment, students were given post tests. These post tests included multiple passages from QRI 4. Both expository and narrative passages where used and students were encouraged to use the paraphrasing strategy. In addition, students were able to use a Venn diagram on expository text as an extra scaffold. Students were again given the Burke’s Reading Inventory as well as a text identification assessment.

Definition of Terms

*Expository Text Structure:* The structural pattern, or the way information is organized. Expository or informational text conveys and communicates factual information (Reading Strategy of the Month, 2005).
**Informational Text—Also known as expository text or non-fiction:** Text that provides facts, ideas, and principles that are related to the physical, biological, or social world; classified as non-fiction text

*Think Aloud:* “is creating a record through talking aloud the strategic decision making and interpretive processes of going through a text reporting everything that a reader is aware of noticing, doing, seeing, feeling, asking, and understanding as he/she reads” (Wilhelm, 2001, p. 19).

**Limitations of the Research**

There are a few limitations to this study. To begin with, the six students came from three different classrooms. In addition, five of the six students received reading intervention from the researcher during the school day where both narrative and expository text were used as well as the comprehension strategies taught in the treatment. There may have been cross over of comprehension strategies. Since the treatment was at the end of the day, some students were fatigued and may not have participated or attended at optimal levels.

**Organization of the Study**

Chapter 2 describes a review of literature in the areas of comprehension, informational text, text structures, and comprehension strategies. Chapter 3 includes a detailed description of the methodology including significant information about the participants’ treatment and procedure, data collection and an overview of the data analysis. Chapter 4 reviews the results of the treatment, and Chapter 5 includes results
of the study in the context of professional literature. Chapter 5 then concludes with recommendations for future research and suggestions for classroom practices.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to answer the following question: If you explicitly teach informational text structures and vocabulary for compare and contrast, sequencing and descriptive text with English Learners, will their comprehension improve? In addition, the following strategy was explicitly taught: paraphrasing through think alouds. A secondary question investigated whether students’ definitions of reading shifted to more of a comprehension level rather than simple decoding.

**Fluency**

According to Applegate et al. (2009), in recent years researchers have found that there is a relationship between fluency and comprehension. It has been hypothesized that if a student has to spend energy on decoding, it will limit the energy spent on comprehension. However, according to Applegate et al. (2009), in the field of education many administrators and teachers have taken this idea to an extreme. Too much of their attention has been placed on accuracy and fluency and not on teaching comprehension strategies.

Hicks (2009) stated that the goal of reading is to make meaning rather than to read quickly. She went on to suggest that the reading rate is important but overemphasis on fluency can hamper comprehension.

Applegate et al. (2009) conducted a study to look at the relationship between fluency rate and comprehension. 171 children who were all considered fluent readers were tested. Each student was given a passage to read orally and silently. After
reading, they answered a number of comprehension questions ranging from text based, inferences, and critical responses. Of the 171 students, 35% answered the comprehension questions at an advanced level. 32% of the students answered questions at a proficient level. However, 33%, or one-third, of the students were scored at a struggling level. This last finding showed that fluency and automaticity does not necessarily lead to comprehension.

Finally, in a study conducted by Shelton, Altweger, and Jordan (2009), students were assessed using DIBELS. DIBELS, which stands for Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills is a thorough assessment of the reading process. This included students’ fluency rate. It was found that a high fluency rate did not necessarily lead to comprehension of authentic literature. Shelton and her colleagues went on to state that a student’s oral reading showed no connection to their comprehension.

Lack of Comprehension Instruction

Dolores Durkin’s study in 1978 demonstrated the necessity of explicit instruction in comprehension. It was found that classroom teachers often gave assignments and tested for comprehension rather than teaching students how to comprehend. In his book *Reading Instruction that Works* (2006), Pressley discussed the importance of comprehension development and explicit instruction in this area. In 1995-1996, Pressley, along with Ruth Wharton-McDonald, Jennifer Mistretta-Hampston, and Marissa Echevarria (1998) conducted a study in which 10 fourth and fifth grade classrooms’ language arts periods were observed. Although they observed
research based instruction such as explicit teaching of vocabulary and high quality of literature, there was very little comprehension instruction. “There was very little instruction of how to process text so that students could understand and remember it” (Pressley & Block, 2002). This study was very disappointing to Pressley as he felt his previous studies along with other researchers in the area of comprehension had been largely ignored (Pressley & Block).

According to Duke and Pearson (2002), one important question that researchers and educators have addressed is, can we teach students to engage in efficient reading behaviors? According to Duke and Pearson, the answer to this question is, “Yes.” There are a variety of strategies to teach; even focusing on one strategy has proven to show positive outcomes on a student’s comprehension (Duke & Pearson). The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000) found that if teachers explicitly taught comprehension strategies, it was highly effective in improving their understanding of both narrative and expository text.

Finally in a study conducted by Dole, Brown, and Trathen (1996), it was found that students who were explicitly taught comprehension strategies outperformed those who focused on story content when asked to read a selection independently. More recently, a study administered by Joanna P. Williams (2008) found that second grade students at risk for academic failure benefited from explicit instruction in comprehension.
Effective Comprehension Strategies

In their article “Effective Practices for Developing Reading Comprehension,” Duke and Pearson, (2002) discussed behaviors and strategies that good readers use when they comprehend. Duke and Pearson stated that good readers are active and have a clear goal for reading in mind before they begin. They also preview the text for the structure and sections that will help them with their reading goal. As they read, good readers evaluate if they are meeting their goal. They think about what they should read quickly and what needs to be read more carefully. Good readers make predictions as they read and confirm or deny their predictions. As they read, good readers construct, revise, and question what they read. Furthermore, they use their prior knowledge to help construct meaning. Good readers also read different kinds of text differently. When reading narratives, good readers attend closely to the setting and characters. When reading expository text, good readers frequently summarize what they are reading (Duke & Pearson). Hoyt (2002) agrees that proficient readers are strategic, they monitor their reading and notice when they do not understand something.

Moreover, Pearson and Duke (2002) believe that comprehension improves when a teacher explicitly teaches comprehension strategies. Duffy (2002) is also in agreement with direct instruction of comprehension strategies. He found struggling readers who received explicit instruction in comprehension strategies made significant gains in their comprehension.

In a study conducted by Dole et al. (1996), students who received comprehension instruction made greater gains over the other treatment groups.
Moreover, the students in the strategy group were more likely to become active learners and felt a sense of control over their learning. According to anecdotal notes taken by the researcher, students in the treatment group were more active and vocal than in the control groups. In this treatment, the teacher scaffolded when she modeled and gradually released responsibility to the students.

In a study conducted by Eilers and Pinkley (2006), first grade students were taught comprehension monitoring processes strategies explicitly. It was found that primary grade students benefited from this explicit instruction. In this study, explicit teaching of comprehension strategies significantly improved the students’ reading comprehension. Finally, Eilers and Pinkley went on to suggest that reading comprehension should begin at an early age and can be taught simultaneously as children are learning how to decode.

Meta-Cognition/Think Aloud

According to Martinez (2006), meta-cognition is more than thinking about thinking. It is “Monitoring and control of thought” (p. 696). To describe what this means, Martinez identified three major categories for meta-cognition: meta-memory and meta-comprehension, problem solving and critical thinking. Meta-memory involves knowing what you know or are able to recall while meta-comprehension involves knowing if you understand the text. When many students read, they are not even aware if they are comprehending or not. The second category is problem solving. According to Martinez, this is what you do when you don’t know something. For example, being a classroom teacher involves problem solving. There is no algorithm.
You have to constantly evaluate what you are doing to determine if you are meeting your goal. The third category is critical thinking. Critical thinking involves evaluating the quality of your thinking. Does it really make sense, is the idea stated clearly, do ideas flow from one to another?

Martinez (2006) also stated that it is important for students to understand the term meta-cognition. Moreover, a teacher can model the concept through think alouds. Further, students should have the opportunity to work with others in sharing their thoughts, making their thinking and strategies available to one another.

In a study conducted by Regina Boulware-Gooden, Carreker, Thornhill, and Joshi (2007) it was found that instruction of meta-cognitive strategies enhanced reading comprehension and vocabulary achievement of third grade students. In their study of third grade students, it was found that explicit teaching using meta-cognitive strategies significantly improved the academic achievement of third grade students in reading comprehension and vocabulary development. Students were encouraged to think aloud as they read.

Finally, in a study conducted by Loxerman, Beck, and McKeown (1994), students using the think aloud strategy, performed better on comprehension tasks than when reading orally.

Teachers can assist students in developing their own meta-cognition, and monitoring their thoughts through think alouds (Rea & Mercuri 2006).
Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing has been identified as a strategy that good readers use while they are reading (Kletzien & Dreher 2004). According to Kletzien (2009), paraphrasing has not received as much attention as other comprehension strategies. Paraphrasing is putting the text that one just read into their own words. It is sometimes said to be like summarizing. However, Kletzien suggested that it is easier to paraphrase than to summarize. “In order to summarize, a student must develop a topic sentence, distinguish between important and non-important details and decrease the length of a passage” (p. 73). In paraphrasing, a student is not asked to do these things. They are just restating what they read in their own words. Therefore, summarizing takes more practice to get good at the process and may be seen as a task to do after learning to paraphrase. Paraphrasing is also different from retelling. In retelling, students are allowed to use the same words as the author. In paraphrasing, students are encouraged to use their own words. Paraphrasing requires students to use their background knowledge, or words they know, to paraphrase. It is important that students both understand the purpose of the strategy as well as how to use it. These are the steps one would take to teach students to paraphrase:

1. Teach students to stop and look away from their reading and put what they just read in their own words. If they are unable to do this, they can reread and try again.

2. Point out that this helps you to know if you understood what you just read and to remember what was read. Make sure to use short paragraphs at first.
3. Teacher modeling using think alouds are essential. When reading, leave something out on purpose so that you can model rereading.

Paraphrasing helps students monitor and use prior knowledge. It helps them understand the goal of reading is to understand. Hoyt (2002) suggested that children stop often and ask the question, “What have I learned?” When they do not understand, students should stop and reread. Moreover, she suggested they talk to a partner and tell them what they have read.

A strategy that is similar to paraphrasing is Read, Cover, Remember, and Retell. This was developed by Jan Ellison (cited In Hoyt, 2002). When using this strategy, students read as much as they can remember. Then they cover the text, focus on remembering the text, and finally tell a partner what they remember.

**Predicting**

Kletzien and Dreher (2004) suggested that predicting in nonfiction text is different from fiction. In fiction text the reader is predicting what will happen. In nonfiction, the reader is predicting what kind of information the author has included. Kletzien and Dreher go on to state that predicting is considered a pre-reading strategy and should be used before students begin reading a text.

According to Debbie Miller (2002), when students make predictions using nonfiction text, they are both activating their schema about a topic and using what they know about the type of text they are going to read. Yopp and Yopp (2006), and Hoyt (2002) suggested that students should predict words they think the author will use in the text before beginning to read. As the teacher or students reads, they can confirm
these predictions. Yopp and Yopp described other benefits of this strategy to include, anticipation and setting a purpose for reading,

Text Features

Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2008) reported that there are many text features that readers use to determine meaning and importance in texts. These include: headings, captions, illustrations, boldface words, graphs, diagrams, glossaries and more. Hoyt (2002) suggested that text features can be used to help students navigate through text and provide access to content. When a student is able to use these features, he/she is able to move in and out of text and refer to pages that are most helpful. (Hoyt)

Linda Hoyt (2002) developed a list of tips for reading informational texts. On this list, she suggested that students preview text before beginning to read. They are instructed to look at illustrations, charts, headings, bolded words. She suggested when choosing a book one should look for quality pictures that are closely related to the content of the text. Moreover, she suggested that when reading aloud, it is an ideal time to point out text features (Hoyt).

Finally, Dorn and Soffos (2005) used the phrase “previewing text” to refer to text features. They suggested that comprehension begins the moment a student picks up a book. Previewing is central to learning. They concluded that students who are unable to preview will most likely have difficulty comprehending (Dorn & Soffos). Informational Text

Kletzien and Dreher (2004) stated that there is a real need for teachers to include informational text in their language arts instruction. These reasons included:
Most of what we read outside of class as an adult is informational, state and national standards call for young students to be effective readers of informational text, standardized tests measure student achievement using informational text, children who read a variety of genre have higher reading levels, children enjoy expository text and it is very motivating. Now, more than ever, publishers have made quality expository books available to primary aged children (Kletzien & Dreher).

Moss (2005) concurred with the need to include expository text in language arts instruction. She identified three critical factors on why content area instruction is important in elementary schools.

1. Early exposure to lay a foundation for future success (By grade 6, 75% of text is informational)
2. Informational text motivates children
3. Informational text increases new knowledge domains-The ability to gain knowledge from text is critical in this age of information.

As noted, students are very motivated by informational text. Moreover, young students are capable of understanding informational text. Pappas (1993) conducted a study of kindergarten students. She found that students as young as kindergarten were able to retell expository texts. Moreover, Purcell-Gates, Duke, and Martineau (2007) found that first graders involved in reading and writing informational text were better informational writers.

Although the literature has pointed out the need for using informational text, it is not a regular occurrence in many classrooms. An important study administered by
Duke (2000), investigated 20 first grade classrooms representing all socio-economic levels to see what experiences these students had with informational text throughout their school day. It was found that only 3.6 minutes per day were spent on informational text. In the low socio-economic schools it was even less, 1.9 minutes per day. Moreover, half of these low socio-economic schools provided no instruction at all involving expository text.

Explicit Instruction of Expository Text Structure

Dymock (2005) found that expository text deals with unfamiliar content, contains many text structures, and is therefore difficult to comprehend. Unlike narrative text structure which has one format, problem-solution, expository text has six different structures. These include cause and effect, compare and contrast, sequencing, problem-solution, question answer generalization and description. According to Dreher & Gray (2009), the number and variety of text structures can create difficulties, especially if students have not received instruction in this area.

Dymock (2005) and Dreher & Gray (2009) reported that many students will not learn to read expository text effectively without explicit instruction. Furthermore, Dymock’s research suggested that students who have a good understanding of the structures for expository text have fewer problems with comprehension.

From the late 1970s through the 1990s there has been great deal of research in the area of explicitly teaching text structures. Moreover, the majority of these early studies showed positive results when teaching students to use text features in understanding and recall of text (Duke & Pearson, 2002).
Text Structure and the Primary Grades

According to Kletzien and Dreher (2004), early exposure and instruction in text structure helped students understand informational text. In their study, children who had opportunities to experience expository text were better able to read and understand text as they encountered it in later grades (Kletzien & Dreher). Williams, Stafford, Lauer, Hall, and Pollini (2009) also found this to be true in their study of second grade students. Williams and her colleagues found that explicit instruction in expository text structure can be effective in the primary grades. Moreover, this instruction can be done in conjunction with content area teaching.

Quality Instruction Includes Teacher Modeling and Guided Practice

Explicit instruction and teacher modeling is necessary to demonstrate how the texts work and the strategies students can use (Pressley, 2006). According to Pressley, (2006) there is a model for teaching comprehension strategies. This is consistent with Dreher and Gray (2009) and Sweet and Snow (2003). Utilizing a direct instruction model of learning, a lesson should have the following three components:

1. Teacher Modeling - Teacher models the strategy or text structure using think alouds to describe his/her thinking. She should use a graphic organizer to demonstrate how to organize the information as well as pulling out vocabulary that is essential for understanding the passage. The student’s job in this lesson is to watch and listen to the teacher.
2. **Guided practice** - The teacher and students practice the strategy together and the teacher provides the necessary support. The teacher gradually releases responsibility to the students.

3. **Students practice the new skill on their own.**

   Pressley concluded that, this method encourages active reading which will improve student’s reading comprehension. (2006, p 21)

**Compare and Contrast**

When a student is comparing and contrasting, they are telling how two things are alike and different (Kletzein & Dreher, 2004). Although compare and contrast is one of the most common text structures that a student might encounter, it is also one of the most difficult to understand (Englert & Hibert, 1984). In a study conducted by Dreher and Gray (2009), students initially had difficulty with a text using the compare and contrast text structure. The authors described the following as the problem: Students were unfamiliar with the compare and contrast text structure, students did not have the background knowledge about the animals being compared, and students were English Language Learners and they did not have the vocabulary necessary to understand what they were reading.

According to Dreher and Gray (2009), explicit instruction in compare and contrast text structure can help students comprehend by helping them to understand the structure. Moreover, explicitly teaching the cue vocabulary found in compare and contrast text structure, will help them to recognize the structure when they encounter it. Also critical in helping students understand this text structure was the use of a
graphic organizer such as a comparison chart or Venn diagram. Graphic organizers are an important scaffold to help show a child the similarities and differences of what is being studied. Compare and contrast can help students bridge their known information to new content (Dreher & Gray).

**Sequencing or Procedural Text**

Kletzien and Dreher (2004) suggested that many informational books are written with a sequencing text structure. How-to books often use a sequencing text structure. Sequencing involves the order of steps in a process or event. According to Duke (2010), the purpose of procedural text is to give directions for doing something. It includes material lists and steps to follow. It uses graphics to show steps.

**Descriptive Text Structure**

A descriptive text structure focuses on the attributes of something (Dymock, 2005). This might include its size, shape, location, what it eats, and other interesting details. Many informational texts are written with a descriptive text structure and concept maps are often helpful in organizing the information. This type of semantic map can be useful in writing summaries and reports. (Kletzien & Dreher 2004)

**Self Efficacy and Reading**

According to Pajares (1996) students who have a higher self efficacy in regards to school have increased motivation and are more engaged in their school work. In addition, these students fare better than their peers with lower self efficacy (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000) According to Guthrie and Davis (2003) you can increase the self efficacy of students by providing interesting content. They go on to say that
the more interested students are, the more likely they are to put effort into their work. Moss (2005) suggested that allowing students to select their own books can increase a student’s sense of ownership in his or her literacy learning.

**English Learners and Comprehension**

According to Echevarria, Short, and Powers (2006), more Hispanic students scored at the below basic level on national tests as compared to white students. Also, fewer Hispanic students scored at the proficient or advanced level when compared to their white peers. In addition, recent studies have found that English Learners usually experience more difficulty in reading comprehension than their English speaking peers (Lesaux & Koda 2006, as cited in Manyak, 2007). According to Echevarria (2006), the academic achievement of second language learners is less then English speaking peers.

Manyak (2007) has found English Learner students face more difficulty with unfamiliar content and vocabulary. It is essential that they have strategies to activate their background knowledge, inferring what words mean, and monitoring their own comprehension. Therefore, there is a great need for quality instruction in comprehension for these populations.

Studies have found that using explicit instruction is beneficial to English Learners. A study by Lesaux and Siegel (2003) found that English Learners who were provided explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics within a balanced approach scored equal to or better than the control group on a number of reading assessments including comprehension (Lesaux & Siegel). A second study conducted
by Vaughn, Mathers, and Linan-Thompson (2005) found that students who were given explicit instruction in a variety of reading skills including phonics and comprehension made significant gains in decoding and comprehension and scored on par with their English speaking peers.

Research indicates that English Learners will not use effective strategies unless they are explicitly taught (Rea & Mercuri, 2006). According to Rea and Mercuri, think alouds is an effective strategy for English Language learners. Moreover, the teacher should first model the procedure for think alouds. The teacher can stop at a point of confusion and make notes in the margin. Students then practice this on their own text and ultimately before, during and after the reading. They also go on to state that before reading a text, the teacher should introduce key vocabulary as well as building background knowledge. Students can also be encouraged to skim the text before reading. By employing these strategies before reading, students are better able to understand and interact with the text while reading. After reading, students can have a group discussion, read more about the topic, or write about the subject.

According to Eurydice Bouchereau Bauer (2009) and Patrick Manyak (2007), having a language-rich environment can increase a student’s oral language development. Also, providing some sort of hands-on or visual activity using realia should proceed reading the text (Bauer, 2009; Hoyt, 2002, Manyak, 2007).

The present study involved explicit instruction of expository text structures with second grade English Language learners. The methodology in the treatment used was consistent with the research provided in this chapter. Students began with a
concept oriented lesson, students were then taught key vocabulary for each structure and graphic organizers were used to help students organize what they read.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to address the following question: If you explicitly teach features and vocabulary for expository text structures, will English Learners’ comprehension improve? In addition, will the use of the following strategy encourage students to monitor their reading: think alouds focusing on paraphrasing. A secondary question investigated if students’ definition of reading shifted to more of a comprehension focus rather than word calling. Recent research in the field of education has pointed to the need for explicitly teaching comprehension strategies (Duke & Pearson, 2002). It has been found that although teachers were often very good at assessing comprehension, they fell short in explicitly teaching children strategies to comprehend text (Durkin, 1978). It was also found that explicitly teaching text structures can increase a child’s ability to comprehend text (Dymock, 2005). Moreover, comprehension instruction should start in the primary grades. Highly effective schools gave emphasis to both decoding and comprehension (Pressley, 2006). In addition meta-cognition was seen as an important tool in a student’s ability to comprehend text (Boulware et al., 2007).

A description of the sample population of the current study, instruments used to measure comprehension, intervention methodology, and procedures of the study are provided in this chapter. This research was a qualitative case study.
Sample Population

The study took place in Davis, California, in one of eight elementary schools in the Davis Joint Unified School District. The school has the largest concentration of English Learners in the district, particularly in the primary grades.

The mission of the School is to provide an active learning environment in which our students discover that learning through participation empowers, engages, and enables. Our school community strives to maximize every learner's potential for growth. We will approach teaching with creativity, employing a variety of techniques. (Davis Joint Unified School District, n.d.)

Four hundred and sixty six students from kindergarten through sixth grade are students in the school. Forty percent of the students are English Learners and of those, 36% also meet low income guidelines. Although the school is considered a high performing school, it went into program improvement this year. The English Learner sub group did not meet their Academic Performance Index. The figures below are scores for both the target school’s STAR and California English Language Development Test for the 2008/2009 school year.
Table 1

2009 Test Scores by Grade Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2009 Test scores</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
<th>5th</th>
<th>6th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students Tested</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Enrollment</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>98.7%</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
<td>92.6%</td>
<td>95.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Scores</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Scale Score</td>
<td>355.5</td>
<td>359.1</td>
<td>385.6</td>
<td>387.4</td>
<td>372.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Advanced</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Proficient</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Basic</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Below Basic</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Far Below Basic</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

2008/2009 CELDT Scores by Grade Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance Level</td>
<td>Number and Percent of Students at Each Overall Performance Level</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Advanced</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Intermediate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Tested</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Six second grade English Learners were selected for this intervention
treatment. Two of the students were boys and four were girls. Five out of six of the
students participated in one of the researcher’s reading intervention groups which took
place during the school day.

Each student in the treatment was either meeting grade level benchmarks or
within two reading levels of grade level benchmarks in the area of decoding. This was
important as the researcher wanted to focus on comprehension rather than decoding.
Currently the district uses the Rigby Assessment Kit (Rigby, 2006) to determine a
student’s reading level. This kit has assessment books that range from level 1 to level
30, increasing in difficulty. A teacher takes a running record to record the student’s
accuracy and then asks comprehension questions. If a student scores 95% or above
and is able to answer the majority of comprehension questions, the teacher administers
the next level.

Kindergarten students are expected to end the year at level 2. First grade
students are expected reach level 18 by the end of the year. The Davis district has
designated level 20 to be the benchmark for the first trimester of second grade.
Therefore, using these criteria for selection, the researcher selected students for the
treatment who scored at level 18 or above (95% accuracy) and 80% or above on
comprehension questions, after first trimester assessments of their second grade year

In addition, each student scored at the beginning or early intermediate level on
the reading portion of the CELDT. Table 3 lists the CELDT scores for each student in
the treatment.
Table 3

CELDT Scores for Six Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yahir</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidi</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osmara</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgar</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Early</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The intervention treatment took place from 2:45 p.m. -3:15 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays for seven weeks. Each student was part of the after school homework club and was therefore available for the intervention.

Instruments

Pre and post assessments were given to each student who participated in the treatment. These assessments included a QRI 4 (Qualitative Reading Inventory), The Burke Reading Interview, and a Text Structure Assessment developed by the researcher.
The QRI was developed by Lauren Leslie and JoAnne Caldwell (2005). It is an individually administered informal reading inventory designed to provide diagnostic information about the condition under which students can identify words and comprehend text. It begins with concept questions to assess a student’s familiarity of a topic and to activate his or her background knowledge. It then leads into a prediction based on the concept questions to get students ready for the reading. This is followed by an oral reading of the passage. As the student reads the passage, the teacher records the oral reading miscues which will eventually be analyzed. The teacher can either choose to count each error (total accuracy) or only the errors that affect the meaning (total acceptability). This assessment is timed in order to get a fluency rate.

Immediately following the oral reading the student was asked to give an oral retelling of the passage. This retelling is unaided and the students may not have look backs. The teacher checks off each detail a student recalls from the reading. This assessment helps the teacher identify if the student retains the narrative structure and if most of the important details are included in a sequential manner. If it is an expository text, the student is assessed as to whether or not they give a main idea and details.

Following the retelling, the student answers explicit and implicit comprehension questions. The total correct answers are counted and the student is identified as performing at either independent, instructional or frustration levels. The student continues reading passages, which are becoming more difficult until he/she reaches the frustration level for the passage.
Burke Reading Interview was developed by Carolyn Burke in 1987 \cite{BurkeReadingInventory1987}. Students are asked 10 questions regarding their reading behavior as well as characteristics of a good reader. This survey was designed to ascertain students’ understanding of what makes a good reader as well as awareness and use of reading strategies.

The final assessment was developed by the researcher. Three passages were developed, one for each of the following text structures (compare and contrast, sequencing and descriptive). After the students read each passage, they were asked which text structure the author used. During the post-test the students were also asked to locate the clue words within the passages.

Methodology

The treatment began on Tuesday, January 19, 2010. It included six second grade English Learners. The students were all familiar with each other and the researcher so they got right to work.

Throughout the treatment, the researcher explicitly taught text structures as well as comprehension strategies through modeling (using the think aloud strategy), guided practice, and independent practice. This was consistent with a teaching methodology suggested by Dreher & Gray \cite{DreherGray2009}.

The following text structures: description, sequencing and compare and contrast were introduced by modeling the concept through a visual demonstration that
did not include text. The purpose was to ensure that the students understood the concept before being expected to read the specific text structure.

The books used for the treatment are listed in the Appendix A.

Week 1

Lesson Focus (Sample Lesson Plan in Appendix B)

Text feature - Descriptive Text, Fiction vs Nonfiction

Genre - Fiction vs. Nonfiction

Definition - An author describes a topic by including characteristics such as: size, shape, sensory vocabulary, location, and other interesting details.

Strategies Taught

1. Preview using Text Features (Title, Contents, Heading, and Pictures.)

2. Paraphrasing through think alouds

Graphic Organizer - Spider Graph

Fiction/non fiction. Since the purpose of this study was to identify non-fiction text structures, the researcher dedicated some time the first week to teach the students the difference between fiction and non-fiction. For the first three lessons, the researcher and students read the definition of fiction and non fiction. After reading the definitions, the researcher used trade books to further teach the difference between fiction and nonfiction text. In addition, for three days students spent five minutes at the beginning of each lesson distinguishing between fiction and non fiction text.
Descriptive Text Structure

*Descriptive text structure introduction.* The researcher introduced the concept of description by having students describe an object. The researcher did this by having the students take turns describing a stuffed Cat and the Hat. As they described the object, they classified what they said by color, size, shape and sensory details with the support of the researcher.

*Modeling Through Demonstration and Think Alouds*

While introducing the text “Watch Me Grow” the researcher thought aloud, pointing out descriptive concepts. These concepts included size of the bears, where they lived, and how they cared for their young. She also modeled the use of text features. These text features included the title, contents, headings, and pictures. How each of these features helped out the reader was also discussed. The title gives information about the general topic. Table of contents let you know all the specific topics you will read about and what pages they are on. Headings also let you know what you will be reading about on a particular page or section.

*Guided Practice*

After modeling, the researcher guided students through a lesson so they could practice identifying descriptive details as well as text features. She did this by supporting students as they read “I’m Born in the Den.” Students came up and identified headings on the overhead and discussed how headings can be useful in letting us know what we are going to read about. They also discussed how pictures are important. In addition, the students were guided in the completion of a “spider”
graphic organizer looking for descriptive details about bears. Through the graphic organizer, students practiced recording descriptive facts as well as organizing and classifying them.

Week 2 and 1 Day of Week 3

Lesson Focus

Text feature - Descriptive Text

Strategies Taught

1. Preview using Text Features (Title, Contents, Heading, and Pictures.)

2. Paraphrasing through Think Alouds

Graphic Organizer-Spider Graph

Modeling through demonstration and think alouds.

1. Preview using Text Features (Title, Contents, Heading, and Pictures.)

2. Paraphrasing through think alouds

The researcher read the definition of paraphrasing to the students.

1. Read a small amount of text.

2. Stop and look away. Restate what you just read into your own words.

3. If they are unable to do this, they can reread and try again.

The researcher put the text on the overhead. She then modeled the above procedure. She read a small amount of text, stopped and looked away. She then restated what she read in her own words. She did this five times modeling the technique.
Guided Practice

After modeling paraphrasing and text features, students had the opportunity to practice with support. Students took turns coming up to the overhead, reading a small amount of text, and paraphrased in their own words to the best of their ability. The researcher assisted when necessary. Over the next three lessons, students practiced paraphrasing with a partner. They also had the opportunity to practice paraphrasing during their intervention during the school day.

Independent Practice

Students read a section of “Bear” independently and completed a “spider” graphic organizer on their own. The organizer was labeled with the following clue words: size, shape, location, sensory details and interesting facts. Students read the passage with a partner first, paraphrasing. They then filled out the graphic organizer on their own.

Week 3, Tuesday, Thursday and Week 4

Lesson Focus (Sample Lesson Plan in Appendix C)

Text structure - Sequencing

Text structure clue words. First, then, next, finally, after, before, today, tomorrow, first, second, third

Definition - The author lists events in order. This may include “How to books,” recipes or other sequential information
Graphic Organizer - Sequencing

Sequencing text structure introduction. A visual activity was used for teaching the concept of sequencing before it was connected to text. After making popcorn, the researcher sequenced the events and wrote a paragraph. In addition, students were introduced to the definition of sequencing. Moreover, they were shown the following clue words: First, then, next, finally, after, before, today, tomorrow, second, third.

Modeled Think Alouds

The researcher modeled sequencing using picture cards. She thought aloud as she sequenced the cards using clue words to connect each picture. In addition, the researcher used text from “How to Draw a Vehicle” to locate sequence words as well as comprehending the text.

Guided Practice

In order to gain a strong understanding of sequencing, for three days students spent five minutes during each lesson practicing sequencing cards and writing sentences about the cards using sequencing clue words. In addition, students read simple sequencing passages locating clue words and answering comprehension questions.

Independent Practice

The lessons were concluded by having the students make a smoothie. First, the students read a smoothie recipe. Next, the students took turns reviewing the recipe and putting in the ingredients. Then, they completed a sequencing diagram on the steps to
make a smoothie. Finally, they wrote a paragraph, using sequencing clue words on how to make a smoothie.

Week 5

Lesson Focus (Sample Lesson Plan in Appendix D)

Text structure - Compare and Contrast

Clue words - Compare, contrast, similar, alike, in common, different, unlike

Definition - the author gives information about how two things are alike and different.

Strategies Taught

1. Continue paraphrasing through think aloud

Compare and Contrast Text Structure Introduction

A visual activity was used to introduce the concept of compare and contrast text structure. The researcher had a picture of a lion and tiger. She used a Venn diagram to record the physical characteristics of both animals. Students were also introduced to the definition of compare and contrast. In addition, students were familiarized with the clue words associated with the text structure. These included compare, contrast, similar, alike, in common, different, unlike.

Vocabulary

The researcher provided concrete activities to teach the vocabulary for this unit. At the beginning each lesson, students compared and contrasted two objects or people. During these activities, students practiced using clue words such as in common, similar, unlike or different in complete sentences.
Modeling through Think Alouds

This lesson began with the researcher predicting aloud about what she thought the author would include in the passage about alligators and crocodiles. She recorded the predictions. As she read the passage, she paraphrased, through think alouds and filled out a Venn diagram emphasizing the similarities and differences between the two animals. The researcher then went back and confirmed or denied the predictions. The lesson was concluded with the researcher modeling how to write a paragraph comparing alligators and crocodiles. The following paragraph frame was used:

_________________________ and __________________ have similarities and differences. They are alike because they both ____________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________. They are different because ______________________________

and _____________________________________________________.

__________________ and ____________________ are alike and different.

Guided Practice

For the next six lessons students were guided through the following sequence of lessons. Throughout these lessons, the students compared and contrasted three sets of animals. The researcher simplified the text from the book, “What’s the Difference?” to make it more comprehensible. The rewritten passages have been included in Appendix D.

- Predicted what the author will write about
- Read together paraphrasing the text
• Completed a Venn Diagram
• Confirmed or Denied Predictions
• Wrote a paragraph about the two animals using the provided frame.

The above bulleted points were repeated with three different sets of animals. Each time, the author guided the students through the lesson very similar to the modeled lesson.

*Independent Practice*

On the final day of the treatment, students read a passage about cats and dogs independently. They completed a Venn diagram and wrote a paragraph comparing cats and dogs.

At the conclusion of the treatment, the researcher assessed students’ reading comprehension looking at a number of strategies and scaffolds. Students were asked to paraphrase during post assessments. They were also assessed with the extra scaffold of a Venn diagram to see if that would affect their comprehension. Finally, they were asked to read a narrative passage using the paraphrasing strategy to see if fiction continued to be easier to comprehend than informational text. Students’ text structure knowledge and attitudes toward reading was also assessed and compared to their pre-assessments.

These post tests included multiple passages from QRI 4. Both expository and narrative passages where used and students were encouraged to use the paraphrasing strategy. In addition, students were able to use a Venn diagram on expository text as
an extra scaffold. Students were again given the Burke’s Reading Inventory as well as a text identification assessment. The data was analyzed using qualitative measures.
RESULTS

This study attempted to answer the following question: If you explicitly teach features and vocabulary for specific text structures will English Learners’ comprehension improve? In addition, the following strategy was taught to encourage students to monitor their reading: think alouds focusing on paraphrasing. A secondary question investigated if students’ definitions reading shifted to more of a comprehension focus rather than word calling.

According to Durkin (1978), many teachers assess for comprehension but don’t actually teach students how to comprehend. Moreover, in recent years there has been an emphasis on fluency, thinking it would automatically lead to comprehension (Applegate et al., 2009). Kletzien and Dreher (2004) stated that there is a real need to use informational text as well as to explicitly teach text structure.

This chapter reviews the results of the pre and post assessments given to the students in the treatment. Students were initially given a Qualitative Reading Inventory. In addition they were asked questions about their attitudes toward using the Burke’s View of the Reading Process. Finally, they read paragraphs developed by the researcher to determine if they could identify informational text structures.

At the end of the treatment, students were assessed on the QRI 4, again to measure growth. Students were also given the second grade expository passage that had a compare and contrast text structure. First, they read the passage with paraphrasing and they were asked the comprehension questions. A few days later they
read the passage again and were allowed to use a Venn diagram as a scaffold before answering the comprehension questions. Finally, they read the second grade narrative passage, paraphrasing, and answered the comprehension questions. Students were given the Burke’s View of the Reading Process again. Their assessment concluded by rereading the passages developed by the researcher and identifying the text structure. They were also asked to identify the clue words within the passages.

The following section presents pre and post treatment scores on the Qualitative Reading Inventory, Burke’s View of the Reading Process, and text structure identification for all subjects in the study. Further, the investigator’s notes regarding subjects use of think aloud strategy and her assessment observations are also provided.

QRI

Edgar

Pre-assessment. When Edgar was initially assessed, he read 18/20 of the first grade word list. Edgar read the first grade expository passage “The Brain and Five Senses” at an instructional level with four errors. Two of his errors involved leaving off an ending (s). The other two errors were the result of skipping words. He answered 4 out of the 6 (66%) comprehension questions, which is considered instructional. One question he missed was an implicit question; the other was an explicit error, not being able to recall a detail.

Post-assessment. Before reading the first grade passage “The Brain and Five Senses,” Edgar was prompted to paraphrase. On the post test, his accuracy score increased from an instructional level with four errors to an independent level with one
error. His one error was leaving off an (s) at the end of a word which was consistent with the error he made in the pre-test. He made the exact error in his pre-test, “nose” for “noses.” This time, Edgar was able to recall information about the brain and how it makes the senses work. He answered the comprehension questions at an independent level with 6 out of 6 which is 100% correct. This is an increase of 33%.

Edgar then read the second grade expository passage “Whales and Fish” and he was prompted to paraphrase. He read it at an instructional level with six errors. Two of his errors were irregular words, two words were skipped, one word was a decodable word, and the final error was the result of mixing up the sight word for/of. He answered 1 out of 8 (12.5%) comprehension questions correctly. The question he answered was an implicit question. His score was at the frustration level.

A few days later Edgar was asked to read the same passage again silently and to complete a Venn diagram. After completing the Venn diagram, Edgar read the passage to the researcher. When asked the comprehension questions again, he was able to answer 6/8 (75%) answers correctly. This is an increase of 62.5 %. Both questions he missed were implicit in nature.

The final passage Edgar read was a second grade narrative, “What Can I Get for My Toy?” Before reading he was prompted to paraphrase. Edgar read the passage at an instructional level and answered 7 out of 8 questions correctly (88%), which is at the instructional level. The question he missed was a higher level implicit question.
Think aloud/paraphrasing. As Edgar read he paraphrased often using the words from the text rather than his own words. He didn’t add any background knowledge or make any connections.

Observations. Before the treatment, Edgar’s ability to decode was better than his comprehension. He often read quickly, never stopping to think. His decoding errors on the pre-test were often the result of leaving off the ending (s) or skipping words. On the post test Edgar was able to read the second grade passage at an instructional level. The majority of his errors were not the result of decoding difficulties. They were due to skipping words and leaving off endings. When prompted to paraphrase, Edgar was able to understand much more. This was true with both the first grade expository passage as well as the second grade narrative. On the second grade narrative his comprehension score was 87.5%. Also helpful to Edgar’s comprehension was the use of the Venn diagram. He had an increase of 62% when using this tool.

Jennifer

Pre-assessment. When Jennifer was initially assessed, her scores indicated to start on the first grade passage. Jennifer read the expository passage “The Brain and Five Senses” at an instructional level with two miscues. Her first error was the result of leaving off an ending (s). The second error was the result of skipping a word. She was able to answer 5 out of the 6 comprehension questions correctly (83%). Her error was an implicit question involving the brain and senses.
Post-Assessment. Before reading the first grade expository passage, “The Brain and Five Senses,” Jennifer was prompted to paraphrase. Her accuracy score increased from an instructional level with two errors to an independent level with one error. Her miscue was the result of a semantic error. She was able to answer the comprehension questions at an independent level with 6 out of 6 (100%) correct, an increase of 17%.

Jennifer then read the second grade expository passage “Whales and Fish.” She was prompted to paraphrase. She read the passage at an instructional level with five errors. Two of the words were irregular words; the other two were decoding errors. The decoding errors involved both short and long vowels. She answered 5 out of 8 (62.5%) questions correctly, which was considered to be at frustration level. Jennifer was able to answer three out of four explicit questions correctly and two out of four implicit questions correctly.

A few days later Jennifer was asked to read the same passage silently and to complete a Venn diagram. After completing the Venn diagram, Jennifer read the passage to the researcher. When asked the questions again, she was able to answer 8/8 (100%) answers correctly. This was an increase of 37.5%.

The final passage Jennifer read was a narrative “What Can I Get for My Toy?” Before reading she was prompted to paraphrase. Jennifer answered 6 out of 8 questions correctly (75%). She answered all the explicit questions correctly and missed two out of four implicit questions. Being unable to answer implicit questions accurately continued to be a problem for Jennifer. It may be due to cognitive developmental issues.
**Think aloud/paraphrasing.** When paraphrasing Jennifer attempted to use her own words.

**Observations.** On Jennifer’s pretest and post test she was able to read the “The Brain and Five Senses” independently. Moreover, her accuracy improved from two errors to one. Jennifer’s miscues did not follow a pattern. Her comprehension score increased from an instructional level to an independent level with no errors.

The majority of Jennifer’s comprehension errors were on implicit questions. As she read, she paraphrased often using her own words. On the second grade passage, Jennifer’s score increased by 37.5 % when using a Venn Diagram. On the second grade narrative passage with the use of paraphrasing, Jennifer was able to comprehend the text at an instructional level.

It appears that the use of a Venn diagram was a powerful tool for Jennifer. Moreover, Jennifer’s comprehension was better on the fiction passage than the expository passage without the use of a Venn diagram.

**Silvia**

The word list assessment indicated that Silvia should begin reading at the primer level. Silvia read the primer expository passage first. Silvia was able to read the passage at an independent level with one error. Her error was visual substituting “many “for “may”. She was able to answer 3 out of the 6 (50%) comprehension questions correctly, which is considered to be at the frustration level. Silvia answered all of the explicit questions correctly 3/3, but missed each implicit question 3/3. Therefore, the researcher administered the pre-primer passage. Silvia was able to read
the passage independently with no errors. Silvia answered 2 out of 5 (40%) comprehension questions correctly, which is considered to be at a frustration level. Both of the questions she answered correctly were explicit questions. Once again she missed all of the implicit questions.

Post-assessment. Before Silvia began to read she was instructed to paraphrase. When Silvia was tested on the primer passage she was able to read the primer at an independent level with no errors. She was able to answer the 5 out of 6 (83%) comprehension questions. The one question she missed was an explicit question from the beginning of the passage. Her comprehension score improved on the post test by 33%. On the first grade expository passage, “The Brain and the Five Senses,” Silvia read the passage at an instructional level with three errors. Two of errors were irregular words and the final error was a sight word she substituted “a” for “the.” However, she was able to answer the comprehension questions at an independent level. She answered 6 out of 6 correctly (100%).

Before reading the second grade expository passage “Whales and Fish” Sylvia was again prompted to paraphrase. She read the expository passage, “Whales and Fish” at an instructional level with 5 errors. Four of her errors were irregular and one was a sight word confusion, she read “from” instead of “for.” She was able to answer 5/8 answers correctly, (62.5%) which is considered to be at the frustration level. Silvia answered some of the questions partially and was not given full credit.

A few days later Sylvia was instructed to read the passage again and this time she completed a Venn diagram as she read. She was able to answer 6/8 (75%) answers
correctly, which is an increase of 25%. Both of her errors were toward the end of the passage. One was an explicit question and the other was implicit.

Silvia then read the second grade narrative passage “What Can I Get for My Toy?” Once again she was prompted to paraphrase. She read the passage at an instructional level. She was able to answer 8 out of 8 questions correctly (100%), which is considered to be at the independent level.

*Paraphrasing.* When Silvia paraphrased she tried to use her own words. She often makes connections from her background knowledge, sharing what she knows.

*Observations.* Many of Silvia’s miscues were the result of irregular sight words or simple substitutions. Silvia’s score increased from the pre-primer level in comprehension to independent level in first grade with expository text. On her pre-test assessments, Silvia was more successful with explicit questions than implicit ones.

When the extra scaffold of a Venn diagram was present, Silvia increased from a frustration level at the second grade level to a second grade instructional level. Silvia was most successful on the narrative passage with the use of paraphrasing. Silvia was able to comprehend the text at an independent level (100%). When Silvia thought aloud, she often made connections and adds background knowledge. It appears that this meta-cognitive strategy has increased her comprehension ability.

*Heidi*

*Pre-test.* The word list assessment indicated that Heidi should begin reading at the first grade level. Heidi was able to read the passage at an independent level with one error. However, she was only able to answer 1 out of the 6 (17%) comprehension
questions correctly. The one question she did answer correctly was an explicit question that was also in her background knowledge. This is considered to be at the frustration level. Therefore, the researcher administered the primer passage. Heidi was able to read the expository passage independently with 1 error. Her miscue was a sight word substitution “they” for “there”. She answered 2 out of 6 comprehension (33%) questions correctly. Both questions she answered correctly were explicit questions. Heidi was then administered the pre primer passage. She read it at an independent level with 1 error. Her one error was a visual miscue substituting “any” for “many.” She answered 4/5 comprehension questions successfully which is an instructional level. Heidi’s only error was an implicit question.

Post-assessment. Before Heidi began to read she was instructed to paraphrase. When Heidi was tested on the primer passage she was able to read the primer at an independent level with 1 error. Her one error involved leaving off the ending (s). She was able to answer the 6 out of 6 comprehension questions, which is an increase of 67%. On the first grade expository passage “The Brain and the Five Senses,” Heidi was instructed to paraphrase. Heidi read the passage at an independent level with no errors. She was able to answer the comprehension questions at an independent level, 6 out of 6 (100%) correct which is an increase of 83%.

Before reading the second grade expository passage “Whales and Fish,” Heidi was again prompted to paraphrase. Heidi read the passage at an instructional level with 9 errors. 3 of her errors were decodable short vowel words, 2 errors were irregular sight words, two were sight words and 1 was not putting an ending (s). She
answered 4/8 (50%) of the answers correctly which is considered to be at the frustration level. She was able to answer all the explicit questions correctly, and she didn’t answer any of the implicit questions correctly.

A few days later Heidi was instructed to read the passage again, this time completing a Venn diagram as she read. She was able to answer 7/8 answers correctly (87.5%), an increase of 37.5%. Her one error was an implicit question.

Heidi then read the second grade narrative passage. Once again she was prompted to paraphrase. As Heidi paraphrased, she often used the words from the passage and added background knowledge. She was able to answer 7 out of 8 questions correctly (87.5), which is considered to be at the instructional level. Her one error was an implicit question.

*Think aloud/paraphrasing.* As Heidi paraphrased she used words from the passage, but then added a comment from her background knowledge. She also asked questions about things she wants clarified. She always added information from her background knowledge to further clarify meaning. It appeared that this meta-cognitive strategy has increased her comprehension ability. During the school day Heidi continued to paraphrase when she reads. She did this spontaneously without any prompting.

*Observations.* Heidi did not have many miscues on her pre-test. The few errors that she had were substitutions based on visual information. Heidi’s score increased from the pre-primer level in comprehension to independent level in first grade with
expository text. Heidi was most successful when answering explicit questions from the passage.

When the extra scaffold of a Venn diagram was present on the second grade expository text, Heidi’s score increased 37.5% to an instructional level. On the narrative passage with the use of paraphrasing, Heidi was able to comprehend the text at an instructional level (87%).

The use of the Venn diagram and paraphrasing during the fiction text both aided in Heidi’s comprehension.

Yahir

Although the word list assessment indicated that Yahir should begin reading at the second grade level, the researcher began at the first grade level because she knew that Yahir’s ability to decode was higher than his comprehension level. Yahir was able to read the passage at an independent level with one error. His one error was a simple substitution. He read “us” for “use.” He was able to answer 1 out of the 6 comprehension questions correctly (17%), which is considered to be at the frustration level. The question that he got correct was an explicit question. Therefore, the researcher administered the primer passage. Yahir had 3 self corrections and no errors. He scored 6 out of 18 on the retelling portion. Yahir answered 3 out of 6 (50%) comprehension questions correctly. Two of the questions he answered correctly were implicit and 1 was explicit. Yahir was then administered the pre primer passage. He was able to read the passage at an independent level with no errors. On the
comprehension questions, he was able to answer 4 out of 5 correctly. His one error was an implicit question.

*Post-assessment.* Before Yahir began to read he was instructed to paraphrase. When Yahir read the expository primer passage he was able to read it an independent level with no errors. He was able to answer the 4 out of 6 comprehension questions correctly (66%). This was an increase of 16%. On the first grade expository passage, “The Brain and the Five Senses,” Yahir read the passage at an independent level with no errors. He was able to answer the comprehension questions at an instructional level. He answered 5 out of 6 (83%) correctly which is an increase of 67%. His one error was on an explicit question.

Before reading the second grade passage, Yahir was again prompted to paraphrase. Yahir read the passage at an independent level with 1 error. His 1 error was a sight word problem substituting “there” for “them.” He answered 3/8 answers correctly (37.5%), which is considered to be at the frustration level. Two of the questions he got correct were implicit questions and one was explicit.

A few days later Yahir was instructed to read the passage again. This time he completed a Venn diagram as he read. He was able to answer 6/8 (75%) correctly, which is an increase of 38%. The two errors he made were explicit questions.

Yahir then read the second grade narrative passage, “What Can I Get For My Toy?” Once again he was prompted to paraphrase. As Yahir paraphrased he often used the words from the passage and added background knowledge that was sometimes confusing. He read the passage at an independent level. He was able to answer 7 out of
8 questions correctly, which was considered to be at the instructional level. His one error was on an implicit question.

*Observations.* When Yahir began the treatment his ability to decode was much greater than his comprehension. He scored at a pre-primer level for comprehension and was able to read the word list at the second grade level. He had very few decoding errors. On the post test, Yahir’s comprehension score increased from the pre-primer level to a first grade level.

Initially on the comprehension questions, Yahir had difficulty with the explicit questions. However, the use of think alouds and paraphrasing has helped Yahir. In addition, the use of a Venn diagram aided in his comprehension. With these scaffolds in place, his ability to answer explicit questions improved.

*Think aloud/paraphrasing.* As Yahir paraphrased, he tried to use his own words and he added personal comments. At times however, he included information that was inaccurate and confusing.

*Osmara*

*Pre-assessment.* When Osmara was initially assessed, she read 18/20 of the first grade word list. Therefore, the researcher had Osmara read the first grade expository passage, “The Brain and the Five Senses.” Osmara was able to read the passage at an independent level with 1 error. Her miscue was a sight word error, saying “a” for “and.” She was able to recall four senses. She answered 4 out of the 6 comprehension questions correctly (66%), which was considered to be at an
instructional level. Osmara missed both questions about how the brain is involved with the senses.

Post-assessment. Before reading the first grade expository passage “The Brain and the Five Senses,” Osmara was prompted to paraphrase. Osmara was able to read this passage at an independent level with no errors. Her accuracy score increased from an independent level with 1 error to an independent level with no error. Her comprehension remained the same, answering 4 of the 6 questions correct. She had difficulty with the same implicit questions.

Osmara then read the second grade expository passage. Once again she was prompted to paraphrase but had difficulty with the think aloud task. She read it at an independent level with 2 errors. She answered 1 out of 8 comprehension questions correctly (12.5%). The one question she scored correct was an implicit question.

A few days later Osmara was asked to read the passage silently and to complete a Venn diagram. After completing the Venn diagram, Osmara read the passage to the researcher. When asked the comprehension questions again, she was able to answer 5/8 answers correctly (62.5%). This is an increase of 50%, although her score is still considered to be a frustration level. Two of the questions she missed were near the end of the passage.

The final passage Osmara read was a narrative “What Can I Get for My Toy?” Before reading she was prompted to paraphrase. As she read she had difficulty paraphrasing. The researcher told her it was okay to use the words from the passage. Osmara read the passage at an independent level and answered 5 out of 8 questions
correctly (62.5%). She missed the final three questions. Two out of three were implicit.

*Observation.* Osmara did not participate in the daily reading group from the classroom. She had difficulty paraphrasing because she was unable to use her own words. She never added background knowledge or made connections.

Osmara had very few miscues when reading. Her initial score was one of the strongest of all the students. Her scores did not increase from the pre or post test. However, the extra scaffolding from the Venn diagram did help her, and her score increased by 50%. Compared to her initial reading of the second grade expository text, Osmara was more successful with the fiction passage.

*Think aloud/paraphrasing.* Osmara had difficulty paraphrasing. She often said nothing or used words from the text. She didn’t add any connections or background knowledge.

*Overall Results of the QRI*

Five out of the six students’ scores improved from the pre to the post test on the QRI for both accuracy and comprehension. Figure 1 illustrates the growth students made on the comprehension portion of the QRI. Yahir, Heidi, and Silvia made the most progress, initially testing at the pre-primer level, advancing to the first grade level. Edgar and Jennifer advanced from an instructional level to an independent level (see Figure 1).
The use of the extra scaffolds of paraphrasing and the use of the Venn diagram also aided in the students’ ability to answer the comprehension questions. Figure 2 illustrates the growth students made when reading “Fish and Whales,” a second grade expository passage that compared and contrasted fish and whales. Initially, students were instructed to paraphrase as they read the passage. The students then answered the comprehension questions. A few days later, they were instructed to read the passage again and complete a Venn diagram. Every student made significant growth using this scaffold. Edgar and Osmara demonstrated the most growth.
Another interesting finding was comparing the results of a fiction and nonfiction text (see Figure 3). Even after the treatment, students overwhelmingly did better on the narrative passage compared to the expository passage without the aid of a Venn diagram. On both passages students were instructed to paraphrase.

*Figure 2. Second Grade Expository Text With and Without Venn Diagram.*
The final comparison looked at the expository passage with the aid of the Venn diagram and the fiction text using the paraphrasing think aloud strategy (see Figure 4). As stated earlier, both strategies led to significant gains. As apparent in the graph, Heidi, Yahir, and Osmara benefited equally when using the strategies. The use of paraphrasing was more beneficial to Silvia compared to the Venn diagram. However, the exact opposite was true for Jennifer. Edgar showed a slight increase in the use of paraphrasing as compared to the Venn diagram.

*Figure 3. Second Grade Expository and Fiction.*
Figure 4. Comparing the Venn Diagram and Paraphrasing Fiction.

Burke’s View of the Reading Process

Jennifer

Initially, Jennifer indicated that if she came to something she didn’t know, she would ask for help. On the post assessment she indicated that she would sound it out. When asked what else she would do, she said she would cover part of it up, and if she didn’t understand something, she would read it again. When asked what makes a student a good reader, Jennifer replied that she reads and understands the text, where initially she replied that books have challenges. Initially, when Jennifer rated herself on a scale of 1 to 5, as a reader she gave herself a 1. At the end of the treatment she gave herself a 5, which is the highest rating.
Osmara

Initially when Osmara was asked what she does when she gets to something she doesn’t know, she said she was confused. On the post test she indicated that she would stop and think. When asked who is a good reader, initially she said her sister. On the post test she indicated that we were all good readers. Initially, Osmara was not able to describe herself as a reader. On the post assessment, Osmara indicated that she liked to read books and she named her favorite title. On both assessments, Osmara indicated that she was a terrific reader.

Heidi

Initially, Heidi indicated that she was confused when she came to a word that she didn’t know. On the post test she replied that she would stop and think when she came to something she didn’t know. When asked what made a good reader, initially Heidi said that that when she was confused her sister would help her sound it out. However, on the post test she replied that her sister would stop and think. On both assessments, on a scale of 1 to 5, Heidi indicated that she was a 5.

Edgar

When asked what he does when he get to something he doesn’t know, on both the pre and post assessments Edgar indicated that he “thinks.” He also indicated on both assessments on what good readers do when they get to something they don’t know. He said, “think.” Many times Edgar mentioned that you should stop and think. On both assessments he indicated that he was a terrific reader.
Silvia

When asked what you do when you get to something you don’t know, Silvia initially indicated that she would stop and think. On the post assessment, she said she would read it again and stop and think. When asked what makes a good reader, Silvia initially said that they stop and think. On the post test, she said that she stops and thinks and doesn’t speed read. Both of these responses revealed an increase in strategy use. When asked how to teach someone who doesn’t read well, initially Silvia indicated that you should teach them to read. On the post test, she indicated that you should tell them to read it again and to stop and think. When asked what she would like to do better as a reader, initially Silvia said that she would read every day. On the post test, she said she would read every day and stop and think about the story. When asked to describe yourself as a reader, initially Silvia said, “I don’t know.” On the post test, she said she likes chapter books and that she likes to read hard books. On both assessments, Silvia indicated that she rates herself as a 5 on the scale which indicated that she was a terrific reader.

Yahir

When Yahir was asked how he learned to read, he said by thinking and comparing, contrasting and sequencing. When asked what he could do to become a better reader, initially he said he didn’t know. On the post test, he replied that he should read more books. On both the pre and post assessments, Yahir rated himself as a 5.
Synthesis of Students’ Responses to the Burke’s View of the Reading Process

Initially, only two students responded that thinking was important when reading. During the post assessment, all students responded in some way that thinking and understanding was important for reading. This is critical to the meta-cognitive processing that needs to take place during reading. Initially, 1 out of the 6 students indicated that good readers stop and think when they come to something they don’t understand. On the post assessment, four out of the six students indicated that good readers think and/or understand what they are reading. This is an important strategy that they are now using. Once again, meta-cognition was revealed as important to these students. Initially none of the students indicated that they liked reading. Now 5 of the 6 students indicated that they enjoyed reading. This is essential for their motivation. On the initial assessment, 5 out of 6 students responded that they were terrific readers and one said that she was a 1, the lowest level. During the post test, all 6 students indicated that they were terrific readers. The self efficacy of these students is high and will benefit their overall reading development.

Text Structure Assessment

Pre-test. During the initial assessment, none of the students were able to identify any text structures. They didn’t understand the term and after reading the passages they didn’t really know what the researcher was asking them to do.

Post-test. During the post test students were asked a six question survey on text structures. In addition, they were asked to read three passages with different text structures. They read the passages one at a time. After reading each passage, the
students were asked to underline the clue words, and then were asked which text
structure the author was using.

*Silvia*

When reading the compare and contrast passage, Silvia was able to locate 7/7
of the clue words. She was also able to identify the passage as compare and contrast.
On the text structure survey, Silvia was able to list 5 descriptors for the descriptive
text feature. In addition, she correctly identified the passage. On the sequencing
passage, Silvia identified 4/4 sequencing clue words as well as correctly identifying
the passage as sequencing.

*Edgar*

On the survey Edgar was able to locate 7/7 of the clue words for compare and
contrast. He was also able to identify the passage as compare and contrast. On the text
structure survey, Edgar was able to list 8 descriptors for the descriptive text feature.
He identified the descriptive passage correctly. In addition, he correctly identified the
passage. On the sequencing passage, Edgar identified 4/4 sequencing clue words as
well as correctly identifying the passage as sequencing.

*Yahir*

On the survey Yahir was able to locate 7/7 of the clue words for compare and
contrast. He was also able to identify the passage as Compare and Contrast. On the
text structure survey, Yahir listed all of the senses and important details as descriptors
for the descriptive text feature. He identified the descriptive passage correctly. He
located the clue words for sequencing but incorrectly identified the sequencing passage as descriptive.

Jennifer

When reading the compare and contrast passage, Jennifer was able to locate 7/7 of the clue words. She was also able to identify the passage as compare and contrast. On the text structure survey, Jennifer was able to list 6 descriptors for the descriptive text feature. In addition, she correctly identified the passage. On the sequencing passage, Jennifer identified 4/4 sequencing clue words as well as correctly identifying the passage as sequencing.

Osmara

When reading the compare and contrast passage, Osmara was able to locate 7/7 of the clue words. She incorrectly identified the passage as descriptive rather than compare and contrast. On the text structure survey, Osmara was able to list all the senses as well as one additional descriptor for the descriptive text feature. She incorrectly identified the passage as comparing rather than descriptive. On the sequencing passage, Osmara identified 4/4 sequencing clue words as well as correctly identifying the passage as sequencing.

Heidi

When reading the compare and contrast passage, Heidi was able to locate 7/7 of the clue words. She was also able to identify the passage as compare and contrast. On the text structure survey, Heidi was able to list 3 descriptors for the descriptive text feature. In addition, she correctly identified the passage. On the sequencing passage,
Heidi identified 4/4 sequencing clue words but incorrectly identified the sequencing text structure as compare and contrast.

Summary of Text Structure Assessment

All of the students were able to correctly locate the clue words for compare and contrast and sequencing. All students were able to report describing words for the descriptive text structure. Five out of six students correctly identified the compare and contrast text structure. Five out of six students identified the descriptive text structure correctly. Five out of six students identified the sequencing passage correctly.

The outcomes of this research were positive. Five of the six students showed growth on the comprehension portion of the QRI when reading expository text. The use of a Venn diagram increased all students’ ability to comprehend a compare and contrast text. Further, the use of paraphrasing through think alouds also had a positive effect on students’ comprehension. Also interesting to note, it was discovered that fiction text was easier for students to comprehend when compared to expository text, even after the treatment.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to answer the following question: If you explicitly teach text structures and vocabulary for compare and contrast, sequencing and descriptive informational text structures to English Learners, will their comprehension improve? In addition, the following strategy was taught explicitly: Paraphrasing using think alouds. A secondary question investigated whether students’ attitudes toward reading shifted to more of a comprehension level rather than word calling. This research involved introducing text structures as well as paraphrasing to six second grade English Learner students.

According to Applegate et al. (2009) an overemphasis has been placed on fluency, thinking it would automatically make a student good at comprehending text. Dreher and Gray (2009) have found that informational text is more difficult than narrative to comprehend. This is partly due to the variety of text structures that are often found, as well as unknown content. Duke and Pearson (2002) stated that students with good comprehension use a variety of strategies.

The outcomes of this research were positive. Five of the six students showed growth on the comprehension portion of the QRI when reading expository text. In addition, the use of a Venn diagram increased all students’ ability to comprehend a compare and contrast text. The use of paraphrasing through think alouds also had a positive effect on students’ comprehension. Moreover, it was discovered that fiction
text was easier for students to comprehend when compared to expository text, even after the treatment.

By the end of the treatment, the majority of the students were able to identify text structures as well as the cue vocabulary associated with them. On a survey related to reading behaviors all of the students indicated that it was important to think when they read. This added metacognitive awareness will enhance their understanding of text. Moreover, they all maintained or increased their self efficacy regarding reading abilities.

Discussion

Five out of the six students increased their performance on the QRI after the researcher completed her treatment. This could be attributed to the explicit instruction in the different text structures and comprehension strategies. According to Duke and Pearson (2002), comprehension improves when a teacher explicitly teaches comprehension strategies. During the treatment, students were taught to use text features such as the title, headings, pictures, and table of contents. According to Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2008), there are many text features that students use to determine meaning and importance in texts.

Students also showed success in understanding text when using the paraphrasing strategy. This was true for both the informational passage as well as the fiction passage in the post assessment. Outcomes support the work of Kletzien (2009). She indicated that paraphrasing has not received as much attention as other strategies, but it does aid in comprehension.
The students in the present study used the paraphrasing strategy to differing degrees. At times it was challenging as they are English Learners. Consequently, modeling, guided and independent practice proved to be very beneficial. This was consistent with the recommendations of Sweet and Snow (2003) and Dreher and Gray (2009) in regards to explicit strategy instruction. Some students were able to put the text in their own words and some even went on to make connections to their own background knowledge. These students fared best when using the paraphrasing strategy. However, even those students who paraphrased using words from the text improved in their comprehension ability. This increased meta-cognitive monitoring aided in their understanding of text. According to Boulware et al. (2007) it was found that instruction in meta-cognition enhances comprehension.

All of the text used during instruction of this treatment was informational. Moss (2005) and Kletzien & Dreher (2004) stated that the use of informational text in the classroom was essential. Much of what we read as an adult is informational. Also, state and national standards call for young readers to be effective readers of informational text. Moreover, it is very motivating to students (Moss, 2005). According to Dreher and Gray (2009), expository text often deals with unfamiliar text, has many text structures, and is therefore difficult to understand. Moreover, Dreher & Gray, 2009) stated that many students need explicit instruction to learn structures for expository text. In this treatment, the researcher explicitly taught text structures as well as vocabularies associated with them. Dymock (2005) suggested that students who have a good understanding of the structures for expository text have fewer
problems with comprehension. All of the students in this treatment were able to recognize clue words for each text structure that was taught. This outcome supported research that suggests explicit instruction of vocabulary for specific text structures is essential. Dreher and Gray (2009) suggest Knowledge of vocabulary of specific text structures will help students identify the structure when they encounter it.

The use of a graphic organizer, the Venn diagram, was beneficial in aiding students’ comprehension. All students’ comprehension increased significantly when using a Venn diagram to record information from the compare and contrast passage. This supports the research of Dreher and Gray (2009) who stated that graphic organizers are important to help show a child the similarities and differences of what is being studied.

All of the students in this study were English learners. As mentioned previously, they all benefited from the explicit instruction delivered in the treatment. This is consistent Pressley and Afflerbach (1995), who stated English Learners benefit from being taught comprehension strategies explicitly. Manyak (2007) found that English Learners face difficulty with unfamiliar content and vocabulary. The treatment in this study included vocabulary development as well as delivery of content. Throughout the treatment, the students were exposed to the vocabulary and took part in many activities to reinforce it. Each student was able to identify the vocabulary in the different text structures. In addition, most of the students were able to correctly identify the text structures. The use of the graphic organizers helped the students organize the concepts they were learning. According to Rea and Mercuri (2006),
teachers can help students internalize content through the use of graphic organizers. Graphic organizers help students understand complicated material in a simple way. Moreover, the use of paraphrasing through think alouds was beneficial to the English Learners in this treatment. This supported the research by Rea and Mercuri, that suggested think alouds are beneficial to English Learners. Lastly, using the modeling procedures described by Pressley (2006) allowed for optimum teaching which was beneficial to the treatment group: Modeling, guided practice, and independent practice are essential for English Learners.

Need for Further Research

At this point there is only a small amount of research involving paraphrasing and primary students’ comprehension. According to Kletzien (2009), the ability to paraphrase is a precursor to summarizing. Given that many students are asked to summarize, more attention should be paid to the ability to paraphrase. Moreover, students are often instructed to make connections and question. However, if they are not aware of the importance of attending to what they are reading, this will be impossible. This research has found that the paraphrasing strategy aided the students’ monitoring and clarifying of what they were reading. The students got the message; you need to pay attention to what you are reading. Second grade students often race through text, thinking good readers read fast. All students, especially English Learners, need to take time to understand what they are reading. Consequently, the paraphrasing strategy was a powerful tool for the students in the treatment. Their scores significantly improved when they paraphrased the text. This outcome supports
the contention that reading is a meaning seeking activity, not word calling or speed reading. Therefore, further studies should be done regarding primary students ability to comprehend using the paraphrasing strategy.

In addition, it would be beneficial to repeat the treatment with an experimental focus. It could include an entire class, involving students with varying language abilities. Besides text structures, think alouds using paraphrasing and other comprehension strategies could be explicitly taught. The use of instruction in academic language before and after the treatment could also be investigated.

It would also be beneficial to look at the developmental nature of implicit questions as some students in this study continued to have with difficulty with the inferencing process. Many students are able to recall information and answer explicit questions. However, the task of making inferences and thinking at a deeper level proves to be more difficult for many students.

Another area to study would involve looking at the definition of “Stop and Think” in a quantitative manner to see which strategy students are most likely is use while they read. This could include questioning, making connections, paraphrasing, predicting or previewing text.

Lastly, it would be important to investigate whether this treatment would have a different outcome for students who have English as a first language. There were times in this study when the students’ low language interfered with their understanding. For example, when reading the second grade expository passage, many of the students were confused with the phrase “live birth.”
Classroom Recommendations

This treatment provided powerful explicit instruction in text structures and paraphrasing which had positive outcomes for the participants. Research suggests that many students need explicit instruction in comprehension (Pressley, 2006) and many classroom teachers assess comprehension rather than teach it (Durkin, 1978). This explicit instruction can easily be applied to the classroom setting and would be beneficial to all students. This instruction should be year long and should include other comprehension strategies such as making connections, questioning, and predicting based on prior knowledge. The think aloud procedure should be used to get students to verbalize their thoughts. This procedure provides classroom teachers with rich formative evaluation data for future instructional planning.

Recommendation #1

*Informational text.* It is very important that classroom teachers have informational books available to students. As mentioned earlier, Moss (2005) and Kletzien and Dreher (2004) both believe this is essential to all students including those in the primary grades. Students are often tested on expository passages and much of what we read as adults is informational. The good news is that children enjoy expository text and it is very motivational (Moss, 2005).

Recommendation #2

Also critical is explicit instruction of text structures. Informational text is more difficult for students to comprehend than fiction text. Moreover, there are many different text structures. Students need many years of instruction on the artifacts of
text structure beginning in the primary grades. In addition, they need to learn the vocabulary associated with the text structures.

**Recommendation #3**

*Explicit instruction of comprehension strategies.* According to Durkin (1978), students are often tested in comprehension but are rarely instructed in strategies good readers use. Duke and Pearson (2002) suggested that comprehension increased when students were taught comprehension processes explicitly. The researcher would recommend that the following strategies should be taught explicitly: paraphrasing, making connections, questioning, predicting, and using text features. Using think alouds is a good way to help students monitor their understanding and model this processing for their peers.

**Recommendation #4**

*Modeling, guided practice, and independent practice.* The final recommendation involves quality instruction. Research suggests that teachers should first model the desired strategy (Pressley, 2006). Once modeling is complete, students should be guided through the strategy. Finally students should have the opportunity to practice independently. Teachers often expect a student to be able to do something without the proper modeling or guided practice. Teachers need to make sure they begin their lesson by modeling. Then they should guide students through the activity and finally they should have independent practice.
Personal Statement

I want to begin by expressing my gratitude to the researchers who have dedicated their careers to researching comprehension. I have learned so much because of these studies and numerous books on the subject of comprehension.

One of the most important teaching techniques that I got out of this study was how to teach students to think aloud. I had often thought about getting kids to think aloud as I heard about it in readings and in classes. The development of this for this research study treatment gave me the tools to teach students to do this. Modeling, guided practice, and independent practice do work!

I feel fortunate that I am going to be able to continue working with the students who were in my treatment group. I was able to introduce the idea of different text structures but much more work is necessary to get these students to really understand text structure.

While doing this research, I was able to introduce many of these concepts with other students with whom I was working; I plan on continuing this in order to affect as many students as I can through my position as a reading specialist. Moreover, I plan on doing in-service for teachers in the area of metacognitive processing and the use of comprehension strategies as well as co-planning and teaching.
APPENDIX A

Books Used in Treatment
### Books Used in Treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beverly Randel</td>
<td>Brown Bears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael LaPlaca</td>
<td>How To Draw Cars and Trucks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy Diehl</td>
<td>What’s the Difference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

Descriptive Lesson
Descriptive Lesson Plan

Add the definition of Descriptive text structure into students' notebooks. Review the definition of text Structure- Have students add more descriptive words to each category.

Students read chorally the definition of description. Edgar was very eager to participate. As I was talking about descriptive he chimed in and said authors describe. After reading description, students took turns writing descriptor words for each characteristic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Shape</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Osmara- small</td>
<td>cube</td>
<td>color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgar- enormous</td>
<td>round</td>
<td>words independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahir - big</td>
<td>rectangular</td>
<td>Sensory details-guided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia- large, tiny</td>
<td>square</td>
<td>students together</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reviewed the previous day's graphic organizer emphasizing the different characteristics: size, shape, sensory details,

Independent Practice-“Bears” Have students read “Bears” independently.

Independent Practice Graphic Organizer- After reading, they will read it a second time filling out the graphic organizer. The graphic organizer will be labeled with the following terms: size, shape, location, sensory detail, interesting facts. Students will share their results. They will use the descriptive vocabulary chart to prove their findings. Students will be finishing at different times. As they finish they can read some non fiction books quietly until everyone is finished.

All students were able to correctly put the following information on the graphic organizer.

Size- big
Color- all students wrote at least one color word.
Location- all students except Yahir wrote woods. Yahir wrote den. He was using his background knowledge.
Shape- Edgar, Yahir and Osmara put round
Sensory details- No one was able to identify the sensory detail. However, while reviewing the graphic organizer Edgar said roar was a sensory detail.
Interesting Fact- All students had an interesting fact
The gecko is a lizard. It can be brown or green. It can walk on walls because it has sticky hairs on its feet. The gecko lives where it is warm. They sleep in the daytime. The gecko eats insects.
APPENDIX C

Sequencing Lesson
Sequencing Lesson Plan

Week 3 day 3

- Reviewed definition of sequencing- Students read the definition chorally.
- Discussed why an author would sequence something
- Reviewed clue words for sequencing- Students read chorally
- Reread how to make popcorn- Kids came up and underlined the clue words.
  Yahir underlined first
  Heidi underlined next-
  Osmara underlined then
  Silvia- finally

- Added the definition of sequencing in our books. We also added clue words.

- Sequenced three pictures on the overhead- Edgar came and showed us what the girl was doing first. Jennifer added the second picture and Osmara added the last picture.

- Guided writing of the pictures- First we added a topic sentence. One day a little girl went down the slide.
  Jennifer- told us how to begin. First- She climbed up the ladder,
  Heidi- Then- she slid down the slide
  Yahir- (We need a word that we can use to end) Finally

- How to make a police car- Had kids come up and underline clue words.
  Introduced start and add.
  Kids came up and underlined clue words. They were able to do this successfully.

Ticket out- Tell me two clue words. All students were able to do this.
How to make a Peanut Butter Sandwich

This is how you make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. First you spread the peanut butter. Then you add the jelly. Next, you cut your sandwich in half. Finally, you eat it up.
APPENDIX D

Compare and Contrast Lesson
# Compare and Contrast Lesson

Day 2 - Review all text structures *We reviewed our senses*

**Review Compare and Contrast - Clue words**

Remind students of the passage about alligators and crocodiles - I learned a lot about alligators and crocodiles. The way the author compared and contrasted alligators and crocodiles helped me understand how they are alike and different.

Each student had a chance to look at the Venn diagram and complete one of the frames.

*Jennifer* - Lions and tigers are similar because the both have thick fur

*Sylvia* - Lions and tigers are similar because they have sharp teeth.

Lions and tigers are similar because they both hunt

**Review clue words**

As I began to read, the student reminded me to put up the great picture in the book. I reread the alligators and crocodiles. We went on a hunt to look for clue words. (I modeled most of this) Underlined both. Reviewed the Venn diagram on how the animals are similar. Edgar pointed out our next clue word - difference. However next clue word.

**Compare was the next word. Difference - Jennifer identified**

It also helped thinking about what I knew about them before I started to read and of course paraphrasing always helps me. Let's go back to the passage and see if any words or phrases that let us know we are comparing and contrasting two types of animals.

**Model Write - Compare and contrast paragraph.**

The paragraph is about ___________ and ___________. In some ways they are the same __________________________. In other ways they are different __________________________. As you can see ___________ and ___________ have similarities and differences.

Alligators and Crocodiles can be fierce animals. In some ways they are similar. They both have sharp teeth and long tails (students helped me fill this in.) But in some ways they are different. When a crocodile's mouth is shut you can see their teeth. An alligator has a wide rounded mouth. Alligators and crocodiles have similarities and differences.

___________ and ________________ are the animals I studied.
Compare and Contrast Texts

Turtles and Tortoises

Turtles and tortoises are similar in many ways. They are both reptiles with scales covering their skin. Each one has a shell that protects their bodies. Both turtles and tortoises cannot ever leave their shells.

Turtles and tortoises have other things in common. They both enjoy basking in the sun. They both will also hide in their shell when danger threatens.

The main difference between tortoises and most turtles has to do with where they live. Tortoises always live on land. Turtles spend at least part of their time in the water.

Another difference is that tortoises have a heavier shell than a turtle.
Wasps and Bees

Bees and wasps have a lot in common. They are both insects. Some bees and wasps even look alike. They both have black and yellow stripes.

But bees and wasps are also very different. Bees are covered with hair and look furrier than wasps. When bees walk over flowers they use their fur to collect pollen and nectar. Bees feed their babies the nectar. Wasps do not collect pollen or nectar. Instead, they hang out at picnics or around garbage cans to find sweet things. Unlike bees, wasps catch their prey and feed them to their babies.

Bees and wasps are similar in another way. They can both sting people. A honey bee will die after it stings a person. However, a wasp does not die. It can sting many people.
Rabbits and Hares

One way to tell a rabbit from a hare is to compare their babies. Newborn rabbits have pink skin with no hair. When they are first born they cannot see. A newborn hare is different. They are born with fur and they can see.

When rabbits and hares grow up you can see similarities and differences. A few things that they have in common are, they both have soft fur and puffy tails. Also similar is that they both eat grass. Yet, they also have differences. Hares have longer ears and longer legs. Hares can also run faster than rabbits.
Leopards and Cheetahs

Cheetahs and leopards have similarities and differences. They both can be orange with black spots. Also similar are their sharp teeth. They both prey on animals and eat meat. Also in common is that they are both part of the cat family.

However, cheetahs and leopards have their differences. Cheetahs are the fastest animal in the world. They can run much faster than leopards. They also have longer legs than leopards do. You can also tell a cheetah from a leopard by looking at its face. A cheetah has a dark stripe that runs down both sides of its face.

Unlike cheetahs, leopards have special claws that help them climb trees. You will never see a cheetah in a tree.
Crocodiles and Alligators

Both alligators and crocodiles are reptiles. Also in common are their long tails, short legs and sharp teeth. Alligators and crocodiles are also similar because they are both covered in scales.

However, alligators and crocodiles also have their differences. Alligators live in fresh water while crocodiles live in both fresh water and salt water. Another way they are unlike is their snouts. An alligator has a wider snout that is rounded. A crocodile’s snout is longer and pointed.

Alligators and crocodiles have similarities and differences.
Cats and Dogs

Cats and dogs have similarities and differences. One thing they have in common is that they are both pets. They both have four legs and soft fur. Also similar is that dogs and cats run fast.

Cats and dogs also have their differences. Cats meow and dogs bark. Also different is that cats can climb trees and dogs can't. Dogs bite people and cats scratch people. Dogs and cats are alike in some ways and different in others.
Butterflies and Moths

Butterflies and moths are similar in many ways. They are both insects and have colored scales. Butterflies and moths also both fly and lay eggs. You might see a moth or butterfly around flowers.

Butterflies and moths also have their differences. Butterflies antennae are thin while moths have feathery antennae. Another difference is you will usually see butterflies during the day and moths at night. Butterflies and moths do have many similarities and differences.
Rabbits and Hares

When rabbits and hares grow up you can see similarities and differences. A few things that they have in common are they both have soft fur and puffy tails. Also similar is that they both eat grass. Yet, they also have differences. Hares have longer ears and longer legs. Hares can also run faster than rabbits.
REFERENCES


