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PERSONALIZED TEXTS AND SECOND LANGUAGE READING:
A STUDY IN SELF-EFFICACY

by

L. AARON MULLINS

Under the Direction of Sue Kasun

and Peter Swanson

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if 1) reading personalized texts influenced novice language learners' self-efficacy in reading in the target language, and 2) if feelings of efficaciousness promote communicative competence. The study utilized a quasi-experimental research design with a pretest and posttest (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017) and a correlational analysis.

The participants were 38 diverse, novice, Spanish students from a large, suburban, high school in the southeastern United States. During the study, the researcher collected self-efficacy data via a Google form as participants completed the pre- and post-Spanish reading self-efficacy questionnaire. The National Spanish Exam (NSE) provided the linguistic competency data. The NSE is an annual, online, standardized examination offered by the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese.

An analysis of variance showed that no statistically significant difference existed in the reported levels of self-efficacy in reading in the target language between the experimental,

personalized-text, group and the control, publisher-provided text, group. However, while the differences were not statistically significant, the participants from the experimental group reported greater growth in pleasure reading than did the control group. In both the control and the experimental groups, 84.2% of the participants reported reading at least one book within the past 30 days. However, this quantity represented only a 10.5 % increase for the control group, but a 26.3% increase for the experimental group. Furthermore, all the experimental group participants had read at least one book within the past 30 days. Moreover, this group's avid readers maintained their previously reported reading quantities, while the percentage of those reading two to three books, rather than zero or one, grew by 67%. The control group's more dedicated readers increased slightly the number of books they reported reading, but the number of nonreaders within the group also increased.

While publisher-provided and personalized texts produced nearly identical growth in self-efficacy in reading in the target language, the personalized texts produced a high degree of engagement among the participants. Future research might explore the sources of this engagement as texts only influence self-efficacy and language acquisition when they are read.

Keywords: aliteracy, personalization, personalized texts, self-efficacy, target-language reading

PERSONALIZED TEXTS AND SECOND LANGUAGE READING:
A STUDY IN SELF-EFFICACY

by

L. AARON MULLINS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Aliteracy, being capable of reading but choosing not to, has become a common concern among all classes of students and in all regions (Brinda, 2011). The National Center for Education's (2013) most recent report of long-term trends found that in 2012 17-year-olds involved in daily pleasure reading outperformed non-pleasure readers by 30 points on the reading assessment. Furthermore, 27% of the participants indicated that they never or nearly never read for pleasure, which represented an increase of eight percentage points when compared to 2004 data. In 1984, only 9% of 17-year-olds stated that they did not read for pleasure (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007). Given such data, the percentage of 17-year-olds who are alliterate has tripled since 1984.

In foreign language education, aliteracy is a concern because students learn to read by reading (Smith, 2004), and it is through comprehending the messages contained in written and oral texts that students acquire language (Krashen, 2004; Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Krashen (1989, 2004) posited that reading helps students improve their reading comprehension and writing style. Furthermore, it provides opportunities to incidentally acquire vocabulary, grammatical structures, and spelling. Krashen (2004) also argued that these literacy skills are more successfully developed through reading than through direct instruction. Krashen (2003) argued that reading is perhaps the most powerful tool in the second language teacher's arsenal. However, students who choose not to read typically have smaller vocabularies, have weaker understandings of text structure, and less automaticity in their reading processes (Smith, 2004). The reading skills that transfer from the first language to the second are less developed, thereby placing alliterate students at a disadvantage compared to their reading peers (Chuang, Joshi, & Dixon, 2012; Prevoo, Malda, Emmen, Yeniad, & Mesman, 2015). Furthermore, if students

choose not to read texts written in the target language, they limit their exposure to large sources of potential comprehensible input, thereby impeding their second language acquisition (Krashen, 2003).

One possible method of addressing the problem of aliteracy among high school Spanish students may be to engage them in literacy-based instruction utilizing high-interest, low-anxiety reading activities. These types of reading activities may embark novice language learners on the journey to translingual and transcultural competence (Barnes-Karol & Broner, 2010; Paesani & Allen, 2012). Paesani and Allen argue for a future of language study centered on literacy development where students simultaneously garner content knowledge while developing linguistic and cultural competence. For that future to exist, students need reading experiences that develop habits of target language reading and that promote the development of a strong sense of self-efficacy (SE) in target language reading. SE is the degree of confidence one feels that one can successfully complete a specific task (Bandura, 1997). Furthermore, one's level of SE determines one's dedication and willingness to overcome challenges; therefore, the development of a strong sense of SE in target language reading could promote a willingness to overcome habits of aliteracy and promote increases in the time students dedicate to reading as well as in the effort these students make to comprehend the texts' messages (Bandura, 1997).

Background to the Study

During the spring of 2015, due to the large number of students who failed the first semester of their Spanish level 1 course, the researcher was assigned to teach a Spanish-1-semester-1, repeater course. Ten boys and three girls were enrolled in this section. Within the first week, it became clear that these students would refuse to complete any learning task that

they believed had been assigned during the previous semester. Therefore, the researcher was forced to seek out highly engaging activities that these students might be willing to complete.

At the time, the researcher was also enrolled in a graduate course on teaching reading in a foreign language and intrigued by the concept of extensive reading (Day & Bamford, 1998); however, the foreign language department had limited reading resources and there was neither time nor funds to order new reading materials. Moreover, the researcher did not believe that the students enrolled in this course would read a 40-page, simplified reader. All but one student had expressed a distaste for reading, and the length of a reader would increase the cognitive demands of reading to the point that the students might mentally disconnect due to cognitive overload. Therefore, the researcher began to produce large-print, one-page narratives that centered on the theme and vocabulary the students needed to learn. Most of the students became adept at pretending to be engaged with these narratives, but a few blatantly refused to even appear to read any text.

After about 10 days of producing and asking students to read these texts, the researcher recalled a presentation on teaching vocabulary. The presenter, White (2013), had taken images of her students and incorporated them into several *PowerPoint* presentations. The images were not fancy. When she needed cups of hot chocolate, the mugs simply floated in the air in front of the characters. However, her incorporating images of her students made her stories highly engaging.

Following White's model, the researcher created a story using PowerPoint. The researcher copied and pasted the seating chart image of one of the students onto photographs from the Internet. In the story, the student appeared to be a baseball star, to be at a concert and dinner with his favorite musician, and to be on the air as a retired baseball star turned sports

commentator. This student dreamed of playing Major League Baseball and wanted to hear Kenny G in concert. He did these things in the story. The researcher printed the story in color and placed it in plastic folders. When students entered the room, he passed out the folders. Before the students had even sat down, someone had opened the folder and the whole class was searching through the images and telling each other where to look and what to read. For the first time, all thirteen students were highly engaged. The students laughed at the images, discussed the text, looked up unknown words, and began acquiring vocabulary and grammar. Even more, every student wanted his or her story to be written and shared with the class. Two students even proposed plotlines for their stories. Due to time constraints, the researcher created only three of these personalized stories; however, their creation presented opportunities to develop a new teaching tool. The personalized stories appeared very effective in engaging students in reading, but their effectiveness in helping students acquire language was unknown. Furthermore, personalized stories were a novelty. Once this novelty wore off, the stories' ability to produce high levels of situational interest and student engagement might also end (Alexander, 2006).

Desiring to measure how effective the personalized texts were in improving linguistic competence, the researcher began to search for a means to measure that effectiveness. Foreign language research suggested that students who read and understood messages acquired language (Krashen, 1989, 2004; Weaver, 1994); moreover, SE has been shown to be a strong predictor of performance and the foundation of motivation (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, the researcher hypothesized that if the reading of personalized texts increased the students' levels of SE, they would be more motivated to read in the target language and the consequence of this reading would be growth in the students' overall linguistic competence. Therefore, the researcher designed the current study to examine the role that personalized texts play in strengthening SE.

Scope and Significance of the Study

The present study may be of interest to researchers studying reading in the target language. While many researchers have examined extensive reading as a method of instruction (Day & Bamford, 1998; Rodrigo, 2011, 2013; Rodrigo, Krashen, & Gribbons, 2004), research on the use of personalized texts in the foreign language and second language classroom is scarce. To some degree, personalization was promoted as part of the language experience approach to teaching children to read. In that approach, the teacher drew upon the children's personal and collective experiences and the children dictated the reading text which was then written on chart paper and read repeatedly (Weaver, 1994). However, in this study, the personalization expressed by the text was reinforced with images of the participants.

Personalized texts' power to promote engagement in reading centered on the images. The images drew the students into the texts and created the desire to understand the message contained in the words. As the current study did not examine the influence of these personalized images, researchers interested in images and their influence on reading may also find this study of interest. Finally, the current study should be of interest to foreign and second language teachers. Teachers generally seek out teaching methods that engage their students or increase the students' willingness to participate in the learning activities. Using personalized texts promoted high levels of engagement among students classified as gifted and talented, regular education, and special education. Furthermore, it promoted engagement among students who self-identified as avid readers and as non-readers. Therefore, this study may be of interest to foreign language teachers.

List of terms

1. Communicative competence – A combination of grammatical competence, socio linguistic competence, and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). In other words, the individual has achieved a degree of grammatical accuracy in oral and written communication, employs the culturally appropriate norms of communication within a variety of contexts from formal to informal, and successfully draws upon strategies to restore communication when communicative processes break down.
2. Comprehensible input – Comprehensible input is any language aural or written that is understandable to the language learner (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).
3. Foreign language – A language that is not the learners’ native language and is not the language of the community.
4. Novice language learners – In the domain of reading, the Proficiency Guidelines set forth by the American Council on the teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL, 2012) describe learners as Novice-low when they can only identify a limited number of high-frequency words and phrases when strongly supported by context. These learners reach Novice-mid status once they can “identify a number of highly contextualized words and phrases including cognates and borrowed words;” however, these learners struggle with comprehending texts larger than a single phrase (p. 24). ACTFL describes the Novice-high learner as one that can understand with ease “key words and cognates, as well as formulaic phrases across a range of highly contextualized texts. Where vocabulary has been learned, they can understand predictable language” (p. 24). Within this study, any student whose reading skills falls within these parameters was considered a novice language learner. The study

context was four sections of Level-1 Spanish as a foreign language taught by the researcher. Nearly all participants were studying Spanish for the first time. Data were not collected from the few students that spoke Spanish in their homes. Students who were repeating Spanish Level 1, were included in the study because they still fell within the ACTFL description of a novice language learner.

5. Personalized text – Personalized texts, as suggested by Howard and Major (2004), star the readers. The students are the main characters, and their hopes and dreams often become the fictionalized plot lines of the texts.
6. Second language – A language that is not the learners’ native language but is the language of the community.
7. Self-efficacy - The belief one has about one’s ability to organize and successfully perform a particular task (Bandura, 1977).

Summary

This chapter presented the challenges in foreign language teaching that led the researcher to conduct the study and provided the background as well as the significance of the study. The following chapter is the Literature Review where the researcher explores research on self-efficacy and on foreign language reading. Furthermore, the researcher examines the link between foreign language reading and language acquisition. The final section of the chapter will present the theories that frame this study. In Chapter 3, the methodology, instrumentation development, and data collection procedures are described. Chapter 4 shows the results of the data analysis, and in Chapter 5, the researcher discusses the conclusions, possible implications, and avenues for future research.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

People typically study a foreign language to develop communicative competence. They hope to be able to exchange information with other speakers of the language. For some language learners, communicative competence might mean they are able to guide the lost tourists back to their hotel or discuss the weather with a guest at a social engagement. However, for those learners who hope to use the foreign language extensively in their professional or private lives, communicative competence will include grammatical competence (the levels of grammatical accuracy required for oral and written communication), sociolinguistic competence (linguistic needs tied to various topics, settings, and communicative functions) and strategic competence (the ability to employ strategies when communication breaks down) (Canale & Swain, 1980).

This type of communicative competence might best be illustrated by the linguistic knowledge children have acquired. Children produce innumerable, appropriate and grammatically-correct sentences based upon the rules they have internalized. Children know when to speak and when to be silent. Furthermore, they know what to discuss, where and when it can be discussed, and in what manner the conversation should take place (Hymes, 1972) . While the communicative competency goals of language learners will vary, teachers should design their instruction to support the goals of those seeking advanced levels of communicative competence and then differentiating the instruction for those desiring to develop a “minimal level of communication skills” (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 9). In this way, it is possible for all foreign language students to meet their personal, linguistic expectations.

Language methods have evolved and changed over time. In the past, courses were designed around a grammar-translation model of learning (Canale & Swain, 1980). Canale and Swain described this model as one in which students were presented grammar concepts to master

and the course was organized around mastering these concepts. The vocabulary, the context, and the communicative practice were all coordinated to practice the grammatical concept. In this context, the teacher was the focus of all instruction and linguistic knowledge was dispensed by the teacher.

By contrast, much of today's language instruction follows a communicative model. The communicative model, according to Canale and Swain (1980) begins with a communicative task the language learner is likely to need to participate in. Then the vocabulary and grammar necessary to complete the task are identified. The course is organized around helping the language learners meet the communicative demands of the task. Students frequently collaborate on communicative tasks and seek to creatively solve the problems that arise as they encounter the gaps between their current level of communicative competence and that demanded by the communicative task. In this environment the teacher may dispense knowledge as when grammatical concepts or new lexical items are introduced; however, once the students have been given the linguistic tools needed to complete the communicative tasks, the teacher can become more of a facilitator. To gain a greater understanding of how educators may help novice language learners develop greater communicative competence, the researcher reviewed current second language research

In this literature review, the researcher examines the concepts of self-efficacy and foreign language reading. Additionally, reader-based and text-based factors that may influence reading comprehension are explored. Next, the researcher details the relationship between reading and language acquisition as well as foreign language reading instruction. The chapter ends with a presentation of the theories that framed the study.

For this literature review, the researcher consulted peer-reviewed articles published after 2005 and books. However, some important documents published prior to 2005 were consulted when the information they contained was necessary to provide context to the more current research or the foundational concepts were only available in documents published prior to 2005. The researcher chose not to include work conducted by researchers based in Turkey and the Middle East unless published in a top tier journal after identifying important methodological problems in much of the work being published from this geographical region.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is, a set of domain specific beliefs about one's competence to perform specific tasks (Bandura (1997). These beliefs develop as one actively performs tasks, watches others perform such tasks, receives feedback, and internalizes the emotions associated with such tasks. Empirical research on the role of students' self-efficacy in foreign language learning has been somewhat limited. However, research from other areas may inform this study. Barber et al. (2015) studied students in grades 6 and 7 who were taught social studies using engaging readings. They concluded that it was beneficial to address the reading self-efficacy of sixth-grade English language learners to improve reading comprehension. They also concluded that working with highly engaging texts significantly increased the self-efficacy of all participants.

In the area of mathematics, Topcu (2011) studied the self-efficacy of 82 10th grade algebra students. She found that among the students who received training on using spreadsheets to solve algebraic problems, the students of average mathematical ability experienced significant positive change in their mathematical self-efficacy. Of particular interest, the most advanced and the lowest performing students did not demonstrate these changes in self-efficacy.

Research at the middle school and at the high school levels indicated that self-efficacy is malleable and can change if the students experience success within that domain. Wernersbach, Crowley, Bates, and Rosenthal (2014) examined the academic self-efficacy beliefs of underprepared college students enrolled in a study skills course. At the end of the course, post self-efficacy measurements showed that the academic self-efficacy of the underprepared students was now equal to that of their more prepared peers. Considering the results of these studies and from theory (Bandura, 1977), it is evident that self-efficacy beliefs can be significantly altered by the educational experiences in which students are engaged.

A survey of empirical research on self-efficacy in the context of foreign language learning found only 32 empirical studies published between 2003 and 2012 that examined student self-efficacy in a second/foreign language context (Raofi, Tan, & Chan, 2012). Raofi et al.'s research review confirmed that the tenants of the self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997), which are found in the context of second/foreign language learning: self-efficacy is malleable and changes as experiences provide confirmatory or contradictory evidence of competence. Self-efficacy is a strong predictor of performance, and self-efficacy is domain specific. That is, listening, speaking, reading, and writing tasks belong to separate domains.

While most of the studies examined by Raofi et al. (2012) used a quantitative research design, Wang and Pape (2007) conducted a qualitative study with three Chinese boys who were learning English as a second language. They found that the children were very aware of their language competence and that prior experiences in utilizing the language confirmed their competence levels in a positive or negative manner. Furthermore, they found that interest, task difficulty, content area expertise, social persuasion, and the social-cultural context were factors that exercised extensive influence on the boys' sense of self-efficacy. Furthermore, the boys

overcame their limited English proficiency when they participated in highly engaging activities as well as when they were in safe environments (Wang & Pape, 2007).

Educators and parents exercise extensive influence over the language learner's sense of self-efficacy. Through social persuasion, the feedback they provide, they build or diminish the learner's sense of self-efficacy. Wang and Pape (2007) found that a child, who was consistently told how poor his English was, avoided English language activities more than did his peers. The negative persuasion resulted in a diminished sense of self-efficacy and resulted in a less developed linguistic competence.

While qualitative studies such as Wang and Pape (2007) add to the academic conversation on self-efficacy and language study, many of the quantitative studies share methodological concerns. One has been the use of questionnaires that claim to examine the construct of self-efficacy yet measure other constructs such as motivation or self-concept. In measuring self-efficacy, it is important to recognize the "efficacy belief system . . . as a differentiated set of self-beliefs linked to distinct realms of functioning" (Bandura, 1997). Furthermore, researchers must conceptualize efficacy as "a generative capability in which cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral subskills must be organized and effectively orchestrated to serve innumerable purposes" (p. 37). In other words, the researcher should visualize efficacy as people's belief in their ability to perform multiple subskills in order to accomplish a myriad of potential tasks.

In the research reviewed by Raoofi et al. (2012), they determined that many studies ignored the guidelines that Bandura (2006) established for the creation of efficacy questionnaires. For example, Mori (2002) examined the reading motivation of 447 Japanese university students. In her study, Mori measured self-efficacy with items such as "I am good at

reading in English” and “My grades in English reading classes at junior and senior high schools were not very good” (p. 98). While these items potentially indicate reading competence, they do not measure self-efficacy.

The methodological issues encountered in Mori’s (2002) study indicate the necessity of contrasting self-efficacy with other constructs of self. Bandura (1997) described self-concept as “a composite view of oneself . . . formed through direct experience and evaluations adopted from significant others” (p. 10). He then explained that one’s constructs of self-esteem and self-efficacy contribute to this self-concept or composite view of self. Furthermore, Bandura contrasted self-esteem and self-efficacy. He posited that self-esteem is a judgment of one’s self-worth while self-efficacy is a judgement of one’s capacity. An understanding of the various concepts of self is necessary to avoid potential mismatches between self-efficacy and the instruments designed to measure it.

Other studies have measured self-efficacy by carefully following the methods outlined by Bandura (2006) and have made contributions to our understanding of self-efficacy in the foreign language context. Piniel and Csizér (2013), in their study of 236 Hungarian secondary school students studying English as a foreign language, found that enhancing the learning experience, by making it relevant and enjoyable, increased the students’ sense of self-efficacy. Furthermore, “enhancing self-efficacy can increase the amount of effort invested in language learning, which in turn is likely to lead to positive experiences, which further enhance the learner’s self-efficacy” (p. 539). It would be expected that personalized texts, illustrated texts in which the readers are the principal characters, would be one way to enhance the learning experience and to make the learning process enjoyable, thereby increasing the students’ sense of self-efficacy.

The importance of increasing self-efficacy becomes clear when one considers the connection between a strong sense of self-efficacy and the use of learning strategies. Wu, Lowyck, Lercu, and Elen (2013), in their study of 146 first-year university students in Belgium, examined the relationship between vocabulary learning and reading. They specifically looked at reading tasks and learner related variables, one of which was self-efficacy. They concluded that a strong, positive relationship existed between self-efficacy and the use of learning strategies, and the effective use of learning strategies should promote greater language mastery.

Within the area of foreign language research on language learners, studies of self-efficacy are limited, and many contain methodological issues; however, the research that has been done demonstrates that self-efficacy is measurable and possesses strong predictive power. This predictive power is dependent upon the use of well-designed efficacy scales that measure the specific domains in question. The existent research also indicates that language students with a strong sense of self-efficacy appear more likely to take actions that increase their linguistic competence. These beneficial characteristics of self-efficacy make it a valuable research tool. Self-efficacy research in foreign language learning is limited, but it supports the tenants of the self-efficacy theory. Self-efficacy is malleable. Self-efficacy has four sources: mastery experiences, vicarious learning experiences, social persuasion and physiological states. Of these sources, mastery experiences exercise the strongest influence over self-efficacy. Moreover, educators can contribute to the increasing or diminishing of self-efficacy. While current and past research supports the idea that educators should help students develop a strong sense of efficacy and that better readers are those with this strong efficacy belief, the researcher was not able to locate any research linking efficacy with personalized texts. In fact, he has been unable to locate

any research on efficacy beliefs and instruction using personalized, teacher-created texts. This apparent lack of research represented one gap that this study explored.

Foreign Language Reading

Searching for a definition of reading revealed that no single, universal construct exists. At school, children learn to convert the inky lines of print into comprehensible language through knowledge of sight words or through phonics (Weaver, 1994). Researchers and educators typically call this translation process decoding. While decoding is not reading, it is vital to the act of reading. However, reading is much more than simply decoding, converting written symbols into oral messages. Smith (2004) described reading as making sense of print, and Day and Bamford (1998) operationalized reading as “*the construction of meaning from a printed or written message*” (p. 12 emphasis in original). This process of meaning making requires that readers integrate the content of the text with their background knowledge to understand and interpret the message of the text (Day & Bamford, 1998; Nassaji, 2007; Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Thus, reading is an interaction between the text and the reader, in which “prior knowledge plays a crucial role in the interpretation of texts” (Angosto, Sánchez, Álvarez, Cuevas, & León, 2013, p. 84).

Each of these explanations stressed the construction of meaning. Thus, without comprehension, reading does not occur. Students can decode text without understanding. Students may concentrate so intently on the decoding process that they fail to dedicate mental resources to the comprehension of the text’s message (A. Zhao, Ying, Biales, & Olszewski, 2016). In such cases, the students have not read because they have not understood. Without comprehension, reading does not occur.

According to Day and Bamford (1998), for the experienced reader, fluent [second language] L2 reading is cognitively the same as fluent [first language] L1 reading. However, Mikulec (2015) conducted a miscue analysis of two native English speakers who were also advanced Spanish speakers. Mikulec found that advanced L2 readers were able to recognize and automatically decode aspects of the language and predict upcoming words and sentences; however, even these advanced readers, in order to make meaning from the text, occasionally needed to pause in order to focus on decoding, or to analyze certain words and sentences. Furthermore, the miscues that these readers committed in English did not affect meaning, while some of the miscues that occurred during the Spanish readings did alter the meaning of the text. Moreover, the advanced readers in Mikulec's study, could, when reading in Spanish, predict upcoming grammatical forms, just as they had been able to do in English. However, both participants struggled predicting meaning while reading in Spanish. Mikulec argued that L2 reading places greater cognitive demands upon the reader than does L1 reading.

While the cognitive demands placed upon an L2 reader are greater than those encountered by L1 readers, the factors that influence comprehension in L2 reading are similar to those in L1 reading (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Shrum and Glisan divided these factors into two categories: reader-based factors and text-based factors. Reader-based factors include topic familiarity, memory capacity, comprehension strategies, task purpose, and anxiety level. While a detailed examination of these reader-based factors is beyond the scope of this study, it may be helpful to consider topic familiarity and anxiety level as the personalized texts should present topics very familiar to the readers, and the texts should limit anxiety levels through the scaffolding and the cultural familiarity they provide.

Reader-based factors. What readers already know about a topic influences their reading comprehension. Furthermore, the readers' background knowledge plays an important role in the language acquisition process as the relationship between reading comprehension and language intake fluctuates as a function of the readers' background knowledge (Pulido, 2007).

Background knowledge or schema is central to what is known as schema theory. Schema theory emerged from the work of Bartlett (Alba & Hasher, 1983); however, Alba and Hashner pointed out that the term *schema* lacks a fixed definition. Typically, it refers to general knowledge and it “allows for the encoding, storage, and retrieval of information” (p. 203). In education, schema theory can be a reading theory that argues that reading comprehension is an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text (Shuying, 2013). Shuying presented several schemata, specific types of background knowledge, which contribute to reading comprehension. First is formal schema—the knowledge of the rhetorical structure of texts that explains how different genres organize and present their messages. An example of formal schema would be the paragraph structure in which the first sentence is a topic sentence followed by supporting details. Another example might be the newspaper article in which the first paragraph answers the questions of who, what, where, why, and how. Understanding how a particular genre structures the message helps the reader identify main ideas and supporting details quickly and efficiently.

A second type of schemata is content schema or the understanding of what typically occurs within a certain topic. Shuying (2013) explained that much of this knowledge is culturally specific. In other words, it presents a representation of how, within a particular culture, daily life occurs. An example of content schema might be a visit to a restaurant: including how one is seated, the use of menus, the ordering of food, the paying of the tab, and

the leaving of a tip. These concepts may vary from one culture to the next, and the reader may not grasp the message because he/she lacks the content schema needed to interpret accurately the message. Culture, is the “total set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behavior, social habits, etc., of the members of a particular society” (Richard et al., 2000, p. 117). Culture affects L2 reading comprehension as authentic texts reflect the experiences of the countries that produced them, and without the necessary cultural knowledge, one might comprehend the words, but not the message (X. Zhao & Zhu, 2012). However, when texts are culturally similar to the reader’s culture, they are easier to read and to understand (McLaughlin, 2012; Shuying, 2013).

In second/foreign language reading, linguistic schema, one’s knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary utilized by the author, is vital. A lack of vocabulary and structural knowledge severely restricts one’s ability to make use of one’s content/cultural schema (Grabe, 1991). Linguistic schema represents one’s overall L2 proficiency. More proficient L2 readers are better at decoding, using top-down and bottom-up strategies; therefore, they have greater resources available to dedicate to the form and the meaning of words (A. Zhao et al., 2016). Without linguistic schema, reading comprehension is impossible.

While each schema type plays an important role in reading comprehension, when one typically thinks of background knowledge or schema, one tends to focus on content or cultural schema. Shuying (2013) posited that the mental representations created during comprehension are more elaborate than the textual content might indicate. The richness of these mental images is born from the schemata the reader already possesses. Shuying further described reading comprehension as the process of gleaning information from the text and melding that information with one’s personal schemata. Comprehension occurs when the reader reconciles the two sources of information.

Just as schema or background knowledge influences reading comprehension, reader anxiety may prevent the reader from processing textual information. Students who perceive a reading as difficult tend to experience greater levels of anxiety when compared to those that consider the reading task only somewhat difficult or relatively easy (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Furthermore, Shrum and Glisan explained that students, who believe they must understand every word and concept, experience anxiety as they encounter unfamiliar words or cultural topics. Krashen (1985) and Krashen and Terrell (1983) clarified how this anxiety can affect language acquisition when they described the affective filter. They posited that the language learner would be unable to process language experiences when the affective filter was high or when the person was experiencing anxiety. While the previous authors have argued that anxiety has a negative effect on language acquisition, A. Zhao et al. (2016) found that incidental vocabulary learning anxiety may promote the noticing of unfamiliar words leading the reader to infer their meaning. Some anxiety may promote learning; however, excessive anxiety closes the learner to input and retards the acquisition process (Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2006). Later in this chapter, the scaffolding built into the personalized texts along with their content will be examined. At that time, the researcher will explain how this scaffolding and the texts' content addressed issues of excessive anxiety and background knowledge; however, it is important to first examine the text-based factors that also influence reading comprehension.

Text-based Factors. Text-based factors that influence L2 reading comprehension are the length of the text, the organization of the text, the content or interest level of the text, and the treatment of new vocabulary (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). As this study examined how personalized texts influence the level of Spanish reading self-efficacy and by extension overall Spanish proficiency of novice language learners, it was important to consider these factors.

Shrum and Glisan (2010) argued that texts should be about 500 words long. They suggested that these longer texts would contain redundancies and content clues that would promote comprehension. Elgort and Warren (2014), in their study of 48 intermediate-high to advanced, adult, English-language learners, found that little learning occurred with fewer than 12 exposures to a word. Furthermore, they determined that it is helpful for the repetitions to appear near one another within the text, perhaps on the same page, but definitely within the same chapter. Repetitions separated by extensive amounts of text prevented all but the most lexically advanced participants from learning. While Shrum and Glisan (2010) encouraged the use of longer texts in order to ensure the needed redundancies and contextual clues, they also noted that texts should be age appropriate and aligned with the instructional level of the students. Moreover, Shrum and Glisan suggested that to avoid overwhelming the readers, the longer texts could be broken up with visuals, and Pino-Silva (2006) suggested that texts should be printed in color in order to maintain a feel of authenticity.

Text organization is another important text-based factor. Prose is divided into narrative and expository prose. Bakken and Whedon (2002) explained that children learning to read find narrative prose familiar. The narrative structure has a beginning, middle, and end, and learners know what to expect and are able to dedicate resources to remembering what they have read (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Furthermore, books that have a simple writing style and a straightforward vocabulary and syntax make good choices (Rodrigo et al., 2007).

The role of text organization was previously addressed in the discussion of formal schema. It is important to realize that comprehension is a complex concept that brings together text and reader. While, in general, L2 readers may more easily understand narrative texts, the text's organization and structure is only important within the interaction between reader and text.

When the reader approaches a text armed with sufficient L2 proficiency to interact effectively with the lexical and grammatical demands of the text and with the formal schema required to utilize top down strategies, the reader is better able to learn from the text's message and acquire language. However, not every L2 reader approaches every text sufficiently armed with the tools needed to make meaning from the text and to acquire language from the reading process. Therefore, it is important to be mindful of text's structure and to remember that L2 readers benefit from reading narratives.

Content and interest are also text-based factors. Shrum and Glisan (2010) posited that content should be interesting and relevant to the students, and Elgort and Warren (2014) determined that the level of interest and enjoyment had a positive effect on learning. Furthermore, Tabata-Sandom and Macalister (2009), in their case study of a student of Japanese as a foreign language, found that the most rewarding aspect of reading was the ability to read material that the participant found interesting. For novice language learners, interest may be less important than feelings of success. Rodrigo (2011) conducted a study with 94 university students taking their first Spanish course. In her study, the students' feelings of success and confidence at having read their first Spanish language novel played a more relevant role than did interest in the actual reading. Furthermore, Lola, the participant in the Tabata-Sandom and Macalister (2009) study, began by reading anything she could understand. It was only after developing her reading ability that she began to seek out readings that interested her. Therefore, educators need to balance interest and success.

Finally, it is important to address how new vocabulary is presented. For some students, every text that they read contains new vocabulary. However, the difficulty is not that unknown words make up part of the text; it is how the text communicates the meaning of those words.

Educators can provide a list of words that students may not know along with their definitions. However, as Smith (2004) has pointed out, it is by placing the unknown into a context that we make meaning of it. A vocabulary list does not provide context. Furthermore, the use of such a list would break up the meaning making process, as students look the unknown words up on the list.

Another option for dealing with unknown vocabulary could be to provide glosses. Studies measuring the use of glosses have been inconclusive and contradictory in their findings. Bell and LeBlonc (2000) determined that glosses did not support L2 reading comprehension, while Martinez-Fernández (2010) found glosses to have a positive effect. Jung (2016) conducted a study of 52 undergraduate students at a Korean university. The study examined the use of glosses in relation to grammar acquisition, vocabulary acquisition, and reading comprehension. Jung determined that in the case of lexicogrammatical items and vocabulary, the glosses promoted acquisition. However, the analysis of the glosses influence on reading comprehension was inconclusive. Students' reading comprehension was better with the glosses than without; however, the difference was not significant.

For students to acquire language, they must comprehend language that is just beyond their capacity, or as Krashen (1985) termed it, $i + 1$. Reading is an important source of comprehensible input. While students can utilize context clues to guess at the meaning of unfamiliar words, communication will, at times, require the use of vocabulary for which the text fails to provide sufficient context. In such situations, glosses are a viable option.

In addition to the use of glosses, educators may also incorporate unfamiliar vocabulary and structures into pre-reading activities. In these activities, the educator can present the new words in "terms of their thematic and discourse relationship to the text and link the information

to the readers' background knowledge" (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 193). Such pre-reading activities prepare the reader to engage with the text at a deeper level than could be done with only the aid of glosses.

Studies support the finding that these reader-based and text-based factors influence L2 reading comprehension. Foreign language reading comprehension is important as it influences language acquisition. The following section will explore the relationship between reading comprehension and second language acquisition.

Reading and Language Acquisition

One of the premier studies on reading and second language acquisition was the Book Flood that gave 380 rural Class 4 and 5 students, in eight Fijian schools, access to 250 high-interest storybooks in English (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983). Half of these students were assigned to engage in a shared book experience while the other half participated in sustained silent reading. Over a two-year period, Elley and Mangubhai measured these students' growth in English proficiency and compared it with the growth of the control group, 234 students who completed the traditional English curriculum. At the end of two years, the participants in the shared book group and those in the sustained silent reading group outperformed those in the control group on every measure. Interestingly, those in the shared reading group and those in the silent reading group performed equally well; therefore, the act of reading rather than the reading context led to language acquisition.

Since the Book Flood study, multiple studies have demonstrated that reading promotes language acquisition (Horst, 2005; Krashen, 1989, 2004; Pulido, 2007; Reynolds, 2015; Tanaka & Stapleton, 2007). Furthermore, studies show that text comprehension results in acquisition. Pulido (2007) studied the effect of reading comprehension and topic familiarity on incidental

vocabulary acquisition in 99 adult students of Spanish as a foreign language whose ability levels ranged from beginner to advanced. Pulido found the role of passage comprehension in incidental vocabulary gain and retention to be robust and that second language acquisition is directly connected to the comprehension of written input.

Reynolds (2015) also studied incidental vocabulary acquisition. His participants were 32 Chinese speaking undergraduate students studying English in northern Taiwan. In the study, the students read *The BFG* (Dahl 1982) because the novel contains many invented words that make up the giant's speech. Reynolds found that as exposure to a specific word increased the chance of a reader acquiring that word also increased. However, Elgort and Warren (2014) reported that even 88 encounters with a word were insufficient for learning, if the reader failed to comprehend the main ideas of the text. Furthermore, the acquisition of some words required a greater number of encounters than did others. Words that did not vary in form could be acquired more easily than those that varied inflectionally (i.e. like, liked, liking), and words that varied inflectionally were more easily learned than words that varied derivationally (sing, singer) (Reynolds, 2015). The level of form variation, therefore, indicates the need for additional encounters if the reader is to acquire the word. Reynolds, moreover, explained that "acquiring the vocabulary of a target language is something that never ends, and every opportunity in which the language is used for communication purposes or content learning presents an opportunity to incidentally acquire new words" (p. 491).

While these studies make it clear that second language readers incidentally acquire vocabulary through reading, one might ask what factors influence this acquisition process? Pulido (2007) found that learners comprehended better when they read stories with familiar scenarios. In these cases, they remembered more target words. A. Zhao et al. (2016), in their

study of 129 Chinese-speaking university students majoring in English, found that L2 proficiency played an important role in incidental vocabulary acquisition. In fact, students with larger L2 vocabularies were more likely to infer from context the correct meaning of unfamiliar words. A. Zhao et al. also found that more proficient students were more likely to employ reading strategies. The use of these strategies improved comprehension and had a positive effect on L2 incidental vocabulary acquisition. Realizing that the educators' goals for L2 reading is to promote the acquisition of the target language, it may be helpful to examine reading instruction.

Foreign Language Reading Instruction

Foreign language reading instruction falls into two main categories, based on the goals and purposes for reading: intensive reading and extensive reading. Macalister (2014) described intensive reading as the reading that frequently occurs in FL classrooms. Macalister further explained that the texts utilized for this type of reading instruction are typically beyond the students' current level of linguistic competence, and the help of a teacher is required to comprehend the text. This type of reading is teacher-directed. While describing the characteristics of intensive reading, Macalister explained that the overarching purposes for which teachers employ intensive reading are first, to help learners acquire reading skills and strategies, second, to learn useful vocabulary, and third, to gain an understanding of how meaning is transmitted in L2 texts.

Students experience most foreign language textbook readings in an intensive reading context. To incorporate the reading of personalized text, it becomes important to look at reading in the context of the novice FL classroom. At the novice level, students of a foreign language are learning to read in the target language. The skills and strategies learned during L1 reading

instruction may transfer to the L2 context and help the learner develop as a reader in this new language (Shrum & Glisan, 2010).

Beginning L2 reading is traditionally in the vein of intensive reading. Brown (2009) explained that the readings presented in foreign language textbooks usually require the extensive help of an instructor. Furthermore, Tabata-Sandom and Macalister (2009) described the reading passages placed in foreign language texts as being linguistically inaccessible to foreign language students and frequently frustrating for students to comprehend, unaided. Therefore, the foreign language teacher needs to guide students through the texts typically included in textbooks. Furthermore, the teacher needs to scaffold the activities to aid the students through these intensive reading activities. Without a minimal competency in L2, independent reading is not possible. Therefore, during intensive reading activities, teachers typically work with shorter texts and help students analyze vocabulary, syntax, morphology, and culture. Intensive reading is a strongly focused attempt to partner reading comprehension with language development (Berardo, 2006).

Unlike intensive reading's heavy teacher involvement, extensive reading is independent and is similar to the pleasure reading one does in one's native language. In extensive reading, "the aim should be to understand meaning and not form" (Berardo, 2006, p. 62). Extensive reading was called *Free Voluntary Reading* in Krashen's (2004) summary of reading research. For Krashen, Free Voluntary Reading "means reading because you want to: no book reports, and no questions at the end of the chapter" (p. 1).

The concept of extensive reading is supported by Krashen's (1989) Input Hypothesis, which suggests that the more comprehensible messages a language learner receives, the more language the learner acquires. Also, many of the empirical studies on extensive reading use the

principals outlined by Day and Bamford (2002) as a framework for the research. Day and Bamford suggested that the reading materials should be easy for the learner to read and chosen by the reader from an extensive selection of potential texts. The reader should read as much as possible, and the purpose for the reading should be either for pleasure or personal interest. Furthermore, the reading should provide its own reward with the teacher simply modeling reading and orienting students to books they might find interesting. Students should read silently and quickly. Extensive reading, under this framework, is to be enjoyable and to provide the reader with feelings of satisfaction and pleasure. The reading should be its own reward.

While novice language learners lack the linguistic competence needed to participate fully in extensive reading, principles of extensive reading may be applied to the development of texts that connect to students' interest and provide similar levels of motivation as the student selected texts of extensive reading. The concept of teaching reading through the use of personalized texts was developed with the intent of marrying the interest and pleasure of extensive reading with the linguistic competence of the novice language learner.

Personalized Texts. In personalized texts, as suggested by Howard and Major (2004), the students are the stars of the reading passages. In Appendix A there are sample pages of personalized texts. The students are the main characters, and their hopes and dreams become the fictionalized plot lines of the reading texts. These texts, by painting images of the students' actual or potential future lives, create "situational interest" (Alexander, 2006). Furthermore, students should be motivated to read these texts because they are personally relevant and provide an appropriate level of challenge (Andon & Wingate, 2013; Bell & Gower, 2011). Moreover, teachers who provide their students with high-quality, locally produced, educational materials align the learning activities to the students' needs and to their actual contexts more effectively

than do teachers using mass-produced materials (Jolly & Bolitho, 2011). These texts, in addition to creating interest, support reading comprehension and language development through increased readability, familiar contexts, and exposure to language that while didactic provides an authentic feel.

The personalized texts should provide increased readability over textbook or authentic texts because the vocabulary and structures included in the personalized texts match the vocabulary and grammar practiced during foreign language instruction. As to the number of new words, the words the language learner has not seen elsewhere, the researcher limits them to only about two percent of the entire text. Hsueh-chao and Nation (2000), in their study of 66, adult, native English speakers reading in English, reported that knowing 95% of the words in a text left significant portions of the text poorly comprehended. To understand a text well enough to infer the meaning of unknown words, the reader needs to understand at least 98% of the words (Nation, 2006). Therefore, the control the teacher exercises over the structures and vocabulary should ensure the number of unknown words is limited to no more than two words in every 100. In texts where it is impossible to maintain this extraordinarily low number of unfamiliar words, texts would need to provide the reader with scaffolding to assist with the reading comprehension therefore the author of the personalized texts provided glosses for unfamiliar words. The glosses were located on a page at the beginning of the story and the words listed on the glosses page were bolded within the text.

In addition to limiting the number of unknown words, the researcher worked to create personalized texts that provided the students with a familiar context. The context was familiar because the stories centered on the interests of the reader or of one of his/her peers. This connection forced the teacher to situate each reading within a familiar context. Pulido (2007),

found that familiarity affected “text processing, comprehension, and lexical inferencing and gain” (p. 182). Pulido further explained that participants who were familiar with the scenarios described in the readings were able to form richer mental representations of the texts, and this richer mental image resulted in better comprehension. Better reading comprehension correlated to an initial recall of a larger number of target vocabulary, indicating that familiarity helped with both the reading comprehension and the acquisition of language.

Finally, it is important to look at the authenticity of the language of the text. Berardo (2006) argued that language learners should read authentic materials such as “newspapers, magazines, TV programs, movies, songs, and literature” (p. 62). Furthermore, he argued that these texts had to be suitable, exploitable and readable, or they had no place in the classroom. The problem is that novice language learners require very predictable, highly contextualized texts (ACTFL, 2012). None of these textual forms is readable to the novice language learner. Recognizing this problem, Crossley, Hae Sung Yang, and McNamara (2014) posited that at the novice level, “simplified texts were comprehended better than authentic texts” (p. 107), and language learners with lower levels of proficiency were overly challenged by authentic texts. They concluded that the reading of authentic texts benefited advanced language learners significantly more than it did novice learners.

Some researchers and educators put forward that simplified texts support the language acquisition of novice language learners (Allan, 2009), while others continue to insist that only authentic texts should be incorporated into the curriculum. The author supports the use of well-written, entertaining, simple and simplified texts, but this researcher is aware that some texts, especially those for the least proficient language learners, may contain poor examples of authentic like language. Accepting the reality that not all simplified or simple texts are of equal

quality still leaves one question: can simple and simplified texts expose novice language learners to authentic style language?

To answer this question, Allan (2009) made a graded corpus or database of graded (simple or simplified) texts. She then collected examples of all the ways in which words with multiple meanings were utilized within the texts. In other words, she took words like “deal” and checked the many ways it was used—wheel and deal vs. deal the cards vs. you have a deal vs. the only way to deal with this problem—and compared the uses in simplified texts with that of authentic text corpuses. The simplified corpus did not contain many of the less frequently used words because the texts included in the corpus did not contain these words. However, Allan found that lexical chunks, words that are placed side by side in natural speech and writing, were present in approximately the same proportions as in the authentic corpuses. Allan’s analysis of the simplified corpus tells us that simple and simplified texts can provide models of language that are authentic in their expression. Based on her work, language educators know that simplified texts present the multiple meanings and connotations of words as well as the normal lexical chunks that make up native like speech; therefore, simple and simplified texts can provide novice language learners with models of authentic language. It was intended that the personalized texts created for this study would provide the novice language learners with texts that were readable, set in familiar contexts, and authentic in their language.

The researcher has been unable to identify any empirical studies that examine the effectiveness of language teaching with personalized texts. The personalized texts are simple texts; however, they are not simplified texts. A simplified text always begins with a source document that is then modified to make the text more accessible. Personalized texts are original, fictional texts created to practice specific grammar and vocabulary. They are pedagogical in

nature; therefore, they will never be considered authentic. The absence of research on texts such as those created for this study creates a gap in the literature. While personalized texts are similar to simplified and simple texts in that they are readable, contextually familiar, and models of accurate linguistic expression, their effectiveness as an instructional tool has not been evaluated. This study sought to address this gap.

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory. This study drew from three distinct theoretical schools of thought: social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), psycholinguistics, and the monitor hypothesis (Krashen, 1985). Social cognitive theory suggests that people have some control over their destinies. “People are neither driven by inner forces nor automatically shaped and controlled by external stimuli” (Bandura, 1986, p. 18). According to Bandura, people exercise control over their destinies as they judge the potential consequences of future actions and make decisions based upon the pleasure or pain these actions are expected to produce.

Social cognitive theory further suggests that people act based on the interaction of three distinct, reciprocal forces: “behaviors, cognitive and personal factors, and environmental influences [, which] all operate interactively as determinants of each other” (Bandura, 1986, p. 23). While all three of these forces influence human action, the strength of each factor’s influence varies from situation to situation and from person to person. Bandura explained that if people were thrown into deep water they would be strongly influenced by environmental forces. The influence of cognitive forces and behavior would be limited in this situation. However, there are times when behavior and its intrinsic feedback exercise the greatest influence on people’s actions. For example, people who play the piano for their personal enjoyment have exercised self-regulated behavior over an extended period. In such cases, Bandura suggests that

behavior exercises greater influence than either cognitive functioning or environmental influence.

Self-efficacy. Within social cognitive theory, one encounters the concept of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief one has about one's ability to organize and successfully perform a particular task (Bandura, 1977). According to Bandura, one's sense of self-efficacy influences all areas of life. Efficacy beliefs influence one's hopes, dreams, and behaviors; and it influences the amount of effort one is willing to expend on a given task. Moreover, self-efficacy is a principal factor in motivation (Bandura, 1989; Pajares, 1996). Therefore, a strong sense of self-efficacy increases the likelihood that one will engage and persist in challenging activities. (Britner & Pajares, 2006; Usher & Pajares, 2006). It follows then that self-efficacy "beliefs become the internal rules individuals follow as they determine the effort, persistence, and perseverance" they are willing to put forth (Pajares, 1996, p. 566). Hence, it can be expected that people with a strong sense of self-efficacy within a specific domain, will experience greater motivation to engage in activities associated with that domain.

Bandura (1997) posited that one's sense of self-efficacy is developed as one collects competency data from four sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological states. Mastery experiences occur when people perform tasks, or similar tasks, to those within a specific domain. Vicarious experiences occur as one watches others perform or model these tasks. Bandura (1997) suggested that such experiences were most powerful when the witness considered him/herself to be similar to the person modeling the task. Social persuasion represents the feedback one receives from significant individuals such as parents and teachers, while the physiological state is the conjunction of the body's reaction to task performance. It may manifest as calmness, stress or anxiety. Of the four sources, mastery

experience is the only one that represents actual performance; therefore, it is the most influential source of self-efficacy as it provides the most authentic evidence of competence (Bandura, 1997; Usher & Pajares, 2006).

Even though some researchers have questioned the influence vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states have on self-efficacy beliefs (Kudo & Mori, 2015), others have found strong evidence supporting all four of Bandura's (1997) sources of efficacy (Britner & Pajares, 2006; Pajares, 1996). Britner and Pajares (2006) examined the sources of science self-efficacy in 319 students in grades five through eight studying in a public middle school setting. They found that mastery experiences exercised significant influence over students' sense of self-efficacy. Furthermore, their correlation study determined that vicarious experiences, social persuasion and physiological states correlated strongly enough with self-efficacy beliefs to be considered "precursors of students' science self-efficacy beliefs" (p. 495).

Mastery experiences, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological states are all strongly associated with self-efficacy and performance measures such as grades (Britner & Pajares, 2006; Chen & Usher, 2013). Furthermore, Chen and Usher (2013) indicated that students who drew upon multiple sources of self-efficacy and who had multiple mastery experiences, reported the highest levels of self-efficacy. They also indicated that younger study participants more frequently drew upon multiple sources of efficacy information to produce their efficacy beliefs.

In the context of foreign language reading, it can be expected that students would have multiple opportunities to collect competency data that would inform their SE in target language reading. As students read silently or aloud, they collect performance data on the ease with which they understand the message. Bandura (1997) would label such opportunities as "mastery

experiences.” If one student is asked to read aloud to the class, the others present would have had a “vicarious experience.” Meanwhile the student who read, would receive “social persuasion” in the reactions of the teacher and peers. Furthermore, the reader’s “emotional state” (nervousness, anxiety, calmness etc.) would provide the student with additional competency information. Therefore, it should be expected that reading in the target language within an instructional setting should provide the reader with multiple sources of data with which to evaluate and build one’s SE in reading in the target language.

Psycholinguistics. Social cognitive theory suggests that the most effective means of developing an efficacious identity is through mastery experiences. Psycholinguistics provides the framework for creating these experiences in foreign language reading. Psycholinguistics explores how human language is actually learned and used (Smith, 2004). Furthermore, Smith explained that psycholinguistics reflects a constructivist orientation and regards knowledge as “something generated inside the learner rather than imported or delivered from the outside” (p. 234). Weaver (1994) further described psycholinguistic approaches as “holistic” in that the construction of knowledge brings the learner’s unique repertoire of prior knowledge, experiences and background and applies it some sort of written, oral, or experiential text to construct new meaning (p. 57). This newly constructed understanding is then incorporated into the learner’s repertoire possibly influencing or altering the learner’s previous understandings of the world.

When psycholinguistics is applied to reading, according to Smith (1973), the learner draws upon two sources of information: the words written upon the pages of the text and his or her personal repertoire of information. Furthermore, when the reader’s repertoire contains extensive quantities of information about the text’s topic, the reader can more easily identify

words or construct meaning from the text. Therefore, the learner's repertoire of knowledge and experiences is a vital component of the psycholinguistic model of reading.

In psycholinguistic models of reading, fluent readers do not interpret letters to identify words, and then from the words understand sentences in order to comprehend paragraphs. "Meaning can't be captured in words" (Smith, 2004, p. 165). Smith posited that readers are normally unaware of individual words because they focus on the meaning of the whole. Fluent readers constantly make predictions about the text; however, these predictions focus in on a likely range of possibilities. This focusing on the meaning of the whole, along with the constant forming of predictions, helps the reader make sense of the text. Furthermore, when an unfamiliar word appears, readers are able to pull from their understanding of the whole, the probable meaning of the unknown word. Smith gave this example: "I left my glerp at home this morning and got soaked by rain later in the day" (p. 173). Based on the reader's understanding of the whole, it is easy for readers to guess what a glerp might be. This process of meaning making allows the reader to make sense of unfamiliar features of the text by integrating them into the meaning of the text as a whole.

The use of the whole to understand the parts becomes very influential in foreign language reading. Novice language learners, simply because of their limited exposure to the target language, encounter unfamiliar words and structures when reading. Therefore, it is important that such readers use their repertoire of information and their linguistic knowledge to infer the meaning of the textual components that are yet unknown to them.

The process of meaning making allows readers to acquire lexical knowledge from reading. However, language acquisition is not limited to the addition of new vocabulary. Through reading, one also acquires "all the conventions of spelling, punctuation, capitalization,

paragraphing, grammar, and style” (Smith, 2004, p. 190). The work of other researchers supports Smith’s findings (Horst, 2005; Krashen, 1989). Krashen (2004) further theorized that enjoyable pedagogical activities best promote language acquisition. Smith (2004) reminded educators that reading provides interest and excitement. It can provide the compelling texts that promote comprehension and a desire to explore the world of texts. However, reading can also “bore, confuse and generate resentment” (p. 191), which can turn the language learner away from reading and the opportunities it can provide for language acquisition.

Monitor Hypothesis. The monitor hypothesis is a conjunction of several hypotheses that work together to explain language acquisition. While several theories of language acquisition exist such as the output hypothesis and the skill building hypothesis, the researcher selected the monitor hypothesis as a framing theory because this hypothesis directly links language acquisition and reading (Horst, 2005; Krashen, 1989, 2002, 2004). The monitor hypothesis, as a theory of language acquisition, consists of five hypotheses that work together to explain second language acquisition. The acquisition-learning hypothesis argues that a person may subconsciously acquire a second language in much the same way that children acquire their first languages, or a person may consciously learn the language (Krashen, 1985). Krashen posited that acquired language would be useful in communicating and learned language would “result in ‘knowing about’ language or being able to edit output (p. 1).

The natural order hypothesis suggests that language learners master grammatical concepts in a specific and inalterable order. Grammatical structures will only be acquired when the learner is prepared for them. Prior to reaching that point in the acquisition process, the learner will typically be incapable of correcting the errors associated with late-acquisition, grammatical concepts (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Krashen explained in the monitor hypothesis

that second language speakers can use learned language to improve the grammatical accuracy of their communication when they focus on accuracy and have learned the grammatical rules that apply in the given situation (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Krashen suggested that language content that is consciously learned is only available when the second language learner has time to engage the monitor and edit the language such as when producing written communication.

The input hypothesis declares that humans acquire languages in only one way—“by understanding messages, in other words by receiving ‘comprehensible input’” (Krashen, 1985, p. 2). Krashen suggested that students acquire language when they understand messages that contain elements just beyond their current level of competence, $i + 1$. The input hypothesis represents the learner’s current level of competence as i and the 1 represents the next level along the natural order (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). The input hypothesis takes advantage of the internal language processor, a form of Chomsky’s language acquisition device (Chomsky, 1975) which allows the learner to acquire language concepts subconsciously.

Finally, the affective filter hypothesis indicates that language students must be open to the input received. Not all comprehended input reaches the language acquisition device. If language students should be unmotivated or anxious, then the affective filter engages and acts as a barrier. When the affective filter is disengaged, it allows content to reach the language . focused on the message and its content that they temporarily forget that the message is being delivered in the foreign language (Krashen, 1985; Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

These five hypotheses combine to form a theory of second language acquisition. For the remainder of this study, the term *monitor hypothesis* is used as a term referring to these five theories working interconnectedly to explain second language acquisition. Within this text, the

term *comprehensible input* serves to describe oral and written language that is understandable to the language learner.

The monitor hypothesis connects directly to foreign language reading in that comprehensible texts open the doors for language learners to acquire rather than learn language. A well-written text allows language learners to acquire vocabulary, grammar, spelling, punctuation and style (Krashen, 1989; Smith, 2004). High interest texts lower the affective filter and increase engagement to the point that readers may forget that the message is in a foreign language, thereby increasing the quantity of input that reaches the language acquisition device and improving the language learner's communicative competence.

These three sets of theories provided the theoretical underpinnings of this study. While the study was designed so that each theory influences a distinct area of the study, the learner's sense of self-efficacy, the reading process, and the acquisition of language, their sphere of influence overlaps.

Research Questions

As ever greater numbers of secondary students engage in reading-avoidance tactics, these students fail to develop important literacy skills in both their native language and the target language (Krashen, 1989, 2002, 2004; Smith, 2004). However, people are more likely to engage and persevere in activities for which they feel efficacious. The purpose of this study was to evaluate a potential reading intervention, the reading of personalized texts, to determine its influence on SE in reading in the target language, as well as how those feelings of SE in reading in the target language translated into increased language competence as measured by the National Spanish Exam. The following questions guided the effort to identify the role personalized texts played in helping students develop a stronger sense of SE in reading in the

target language and evaluate the relationship between SE in reading in the target language and linguistic competence:

1. To what extent does the reading of personalized texts affect the novice language learners' level of self-efficacy in target language reading?
2. To what extent does the novice language learner's sense of self-efficacy in target language reading translate into greater overall second language competence as measured by the National Spanish Exam?

3. METHODOLOGY

Methods

The purpose of this study was to compare two possible types of reading material that may be encountered by novice Spanish language learners: (1) the more traditional, publisher-provided texts and (2) personalized texts written and illustrated by the teacher. The goal was to determine which type best promoted a strong sense of Spanish reading self-efficacy in the participants. The researcher further sought to identify a possible association between Spanish reading self-efficacy and overall Spanish language competence as measured by the National Spanish Exam (NSE).

In this chapter, the researcher explains the research design, describes the population and the sampling procedures, describes the development of the Spanish Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (Appendix B) detailing how the Spanish Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SRSEQ) is a modification of Shell, Murphy, and Bruning's (1989) Self-Efficacy Instrument for Reading (Appendix C). Furthermore, the researcher describes the data collection procedure and data analysis as well as the reading process that accompanied the publisher-provided and teacher-created texts. Finally, the researcher discusses the factors that influenced which students became characters in the personalized texts as well as the process by which the stories were created.

Research Design

This researcher used a quasi-experimental research design using a between-subjects approach with a pretest and posttest (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). A correlational design was also used to explore relationships between self-efficacy and student achievement as measured by the percentile scores for the NSE exam. The study began September 20, 2017 and ended March 28, 2018.

Population and Sample

The population of interest for this study was comprised of suburban, novice-level, Spanish language learners, attending large, public high schools in the southeastern part of the United States. The high school where the study was conducted serves an ethnically diverse student body. According to data reported for the 2016-17 school year, the school served 2,997 students. The ethnicity of the student body was 20% Asian, 27% Black/African American, 18% Latino/Hispanic, 4% Multiracial, and 30% White (School Accountability Report, 2018). Furthermore, 9% of the student body received special education services, 5% was classified as limited English proficient, and 43% qualified for free or reduced lunch.

After receiving Institutional Review Board approval, the researcher invited 98 novice Spanish language learners, which were all the students enrolled in the four sections of Spanish Level 1 taught by the researcher, to participate in this study. Of those invited, 94 agreed to participate, but only 48 signed and returned both the student assent and parental permission forms as required by the IRB. During the study, the schedules of two students were changed so that they were no longer enrolled in one of the sections taught by the researcher. Five students' schedules were changed so that they moved from their original condition, control or intervention, to the opposite condition. One student did not correctly complete the post-SRSEQ, and two students moved to another school. Any data collected from these participants was excluded prior to completing the statistical analysis.

The researcher taught sections 1, 2, 3, and 7 of first year Spanish. The 38 participants were all students enrolled in one of the sections taught by the researcher. The age of the participants ranged from 13 to 17 ($M = 14.42$). The sections contained students from across all grade levels; however, the participants were enrolled in grades 9 through 11 with 30 of the 38 or

79% of the participants being 9th graders. Students were asked to self-report their cumulative grade point averages ranging from A to F. As Table 1 shows, nearly all participants, 33 of 38, reported an A or B average. Students' were also divided by socioeconomic status.

Socioeconomic status was determined by those who received free or reduced lunch (42.1%) and those who did not (57.9%). The participants were nearly equally divided between male (18) and female (20).

Table 1
Demographic information of participants (N = 38)

Age	Grade Level	GPA	Socioeconomic status	Gender
13 = 1	9 th = 30	A = 17	Low = 16	Male = 18
14 = 24	10 th = 6	B = 16	High = 22	Female = 20
15 = 10	11 th = 2	C = 4		
16 = 2				
17 = 1				

Similar to the school population, the participants were also ethnically diverse: Asian 32%, African American / Black 18%, Latino 3%, Multiracial 18%, White 24%, and other 5%. The sample differs somewhat from the school population. That is, the number of Latino students in the study is much smaller than that of the school population, which is due to school policy in which Latino students, at least those that already speak Spanish, are encouraged to enroll in a Spanish for Native Speakers course or to study a language other than Spanish. The percentage of Asian participants is much larger than that of the school population, which can be explained by the strong parental involvement on the part of Asian parents; Asian students' parents chose to return the parental permission forms at a higher rate than other ethnic groups. Furthermore, the

percentage of students who self-reported as multiracial was much higher than the school population.

Sampling procedures. Due to the study context, a public high school, and the inflexible nature of student schedules, the sample can be classified as a convenient sample; participation in the study was limited to students enrolled in one of the four sections of Level 1 Spanish taught by the researcher. In place of random assignment of individual participants to the personalized-text experimental treatment or the publisher-provided texts control treatment, the researcher assigned all participants enrolled in the same section to the same treatment.

The researcher employed the following pre-determined procedure to assign each of the sections to one of the treatment conditions: control or experimental. The two sections with the largest gifted and talented populations were assigned to the control group. Students classified as gifted and talented have previously shown strong academic ability; therefore, the researcher decided that if one of the two treatment conditions were to benefit from an infusion of academically strong students, placing those students in the control condition would provide a better measurement of the intervention's influence. Also, if the condition benefiting from the presence of these students were the control, then any significant differences produced by the intervention would have an increased real-world significance. The researcher accessed anonymous section data to identify the number of gifted and talented students in each section. Ten gifted and talented students were enrolled in section 1, while sections 2, 3, and 7 served five, eight, and four gifted and talented students, respectively. Sections 1 and 3 were assigned to the control group—the group that read the publisher-provided texts because these sections had twice as many gifted and talented students as sections 2 and 7. Sections 2 and 7 were then assigned to the experimental group and read the personalized texts.

Instrumentation

The Spanish Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire. The researcher developed the Spanish Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SRSEQ) specifically for this study. The SRSEQ follows the guidelines set forth by Bandura (2006) for the construction of self-efficacy measures and is modeled after the reading portion of Shell et al. (1989) Self-Efficacy Instruments for Reading and Writing (Appendix C). Wang, Kim, Bong, and Ahn (2013) posited that efficacy scales may be modified in order to align them to the culture of the population being studied. In fact, they modified Wang's Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy (QESE) to align it to the cultures of China, Korea, Germany, and the United States. Furthermore, they also modified the QESE, which was originally designed for use with young children, so it aligned with the interests and activities of Korean, adult English language learners.

Shell et.al (1989) created the reading portion of their instrument to measure the self-efficacy of college students reading in their native language. This instrument consists of two subscales: a Component Skill subscale and a Task subscale. The Component Skill subscale contains nine items and asks participants to consider how confident they are that they can perform skills such as "pronounce individual words," item 3 or "phonetically 'sound out' new words" (item 7, p. 99). The Task subscale consists of 18 items and asks how confident the participants are that they can complete tasks such as read and understand "a letter from a friend or family member" (item 1), and "read a graduate level textbook in your major field" (item 9, p. 99). Shell et al. reported a high degree of internal consistency (reliability) for each subscale: component skill subscale (0.93) and task subscale (0.92).

In modifying Shell et al.'s Self-Efficacy Instrument for Reading, the researcher's goal was to produce a scale that would measure a high school, novice Spanish language learner's

sense of Spanish reading self-efficacy. The first step in modifying the instrument was to examine each item of the Component Skill subscale and to determine if the items would contribute valuable information to the current study. The researcher determined that all of the items combined to create a strong measure of the Component Skills of reading. The researcher modified each of the skill items, numbers 1 through 9, so that each item asked specifically about performing that skill while reading a Spanish language text. In other words, item 2, “How confident are you that you can sound out unfamiliar words?” became “How confident are you that you can sound out unfamiliar Spanish words?”

While modifications to the Component Skill subscale involved only the addition of the Spanish language context, the task subscale required multiple changes. Multiple items on the Task subscale evaluated the participant’s beliefs, in relation to tasks that were beyond the capacity of novice, language learners, as well as outside the experiences of the high school freshmen and sophomores who made up most of the potential participants. Shell et al. designed the reading task subscale to represent a continuum of reading tasks that could challenge university underclassmen reading in their native language. During the modification of Shell et al.’s instrument, the researcher removed nine of the original items and modified those remaining to create a context specific instrument to measure novice language learners’ sense of self-efficacy for reading Spanish. As noted earlier, self-efficacy is a measure of the person’s belief of his or her capacity to organize and perform a task (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, the subscale must contain items that represent tasks of varying levels of difficulty across the entire spectrum, so that even the most advanced novice language learner would find some of the tasks challenging (Bandura, 2006; D. F. Shell, Personal Communication, June 14, 2016). However, tasks that all participants would recognize as outside the linguistic competence of many advanced language

learners would be demotivating and inappropriate for measuring efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Thus, one cannot feel efficacious when confronted with an obviously impossible task.

During the modification process, the researcher deleted five items due to the advanced language skills they required: item 16, reading a Shakespearean play; item 9, reading an undergraduate textbook; item 10, reading a graduate textbook; item 11, reading a scholarly article; and item 18, reading a philosophical treatise. Another four items were removed as they were determined to be age inappropriate: item 3, reading a rental contract; item 4, reading an auto insurance contract; item 5, reading an employment application; and item 7, reading an employee manual describing job duties. Given that the participants were mainly ninth and tenth grade students, they could not legally drive nor work; therefore, these tasks would be considered inconsequential to many of the study's participants.

The researcher maintained the tasks that novice language learners might be capable of performing: reading a letter from a friend, item 1; reading a recipe, item 2; and reading a newspaper, item 12. For these items, the researcher contextualized the task so that it would require the use of Spanish. Item 8, read and understand multiple-choice tests was also maintained; however, the context was moved from a college course to the high school Spanish classroom. Task 13, which asked about reading an article in Time or Newsweek, was modified to better align the task with current, American, teen culture. Currently, many teens get their news through the Internet rather than through print magazines (Marketing Charts, 2017). In addition, many younger teenagers may not pay much attention to the news. According to Robb (2017) 48% of teens say that following the news is important to them, but their preferred source is their online social networking applications. Therefore, the researcher rewrote this task so that it asked about reading articles, written in Spanish, about sports, television, or movies.

The researcher modified three other items to ensure that the reading tasks aligned well with the developmental levels of novice language learners: Item 14, “read a short fiction story,” was modified to read a short story assigned in Spanish class. Item 15, “read a 400-page novel” was altered to, read a familiar picture book in Spanish; and item 17, “read a book of poetry” was rewritten as read poems written in Spanish. With these modifications, the 18-item Task subscale became the eight-item Spanish Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire Task Subscale. The SRSEQ presents a range of challenging reading tasks; however, the tasks are aligned to a novice language learner’s potential development, especially if texts are carefully chosen so that they align with the learners’ linguistic development.

The researcher, to demonstrate the range covered by the SRSEQ items, has categorized them according to where they fall along proficiency continuum presented in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012) and the ACSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (2017). The alignment may not be perfect as the proficiency guideline and Can-Do Statements describe a continuum of what students can comprehend while reading generic authentic texts, and individual texts may belong on very different locations on the continuum. Furthermore, some of the items included on the SRSEQ would be considered subcomponents of a reading task rather than a text to be understood. These items have been placed where it would seem the language learner would be able to show initial competence with the subcomponent. Of course, as language learning continues, the learner’s level of competence at each specific subcomponent would be expected to increase until that component has reached automaticity.

On January 8, 2016, the researcher completed an initial draft of the SRSEQ. He placed each of the items into a Google form and piloted it with the 147 Spanish Level 1 and Level 2 students he was teaching at that time. The pilot served three purposes: 1) to check the reliability

of the draft by calculating the Cronbach alpha coefficient. The coefficient for the skill subscale was 0.85 and the coefficient for the task subscale was 0.89. The second purpose of the pilot was to test the logistics of using a Google form as a data collection method as the data collection was completed on a system that limited access to Google forms. Therefore, it was important to pilot test the process. The final purpose was to evaluate the students' understanding of the items. Several students asked for clarification as to the specifics of some items. The information gleaned during the pilot informed future revisions of the SRSEQ.

Instrument validity. The researcher took four steps to ensure the validity of the SRSEQ questionnaire. First, the researcher identified a previously validated, reading self-efficacy questionnaire (see Shell, Murphy & Bruning, 1989) and modified the skill items from that questionnaire to reflect reading in Spanish. The task items were modeled after the tasks included in Shell et al.'s instrument; however, following advice from Shell (personal communication, June 14, 2016), the tasks were designed to be context specific and to represent a range of tasks, from those that should be simple for the novice language learner to perform to those that should be very difficult (Bandura, 2006).

Second, following the measures used by Hildebrandt (2006), two veteran foreign language educators examined the SRSEQ. These educators were asked to consider first, how students might interpret each of the items on the questionnaire, and second, the extent to which the tasks represented the complete range of reading tasks from easy to challenging. A well-designed instrument should contain a broad set of tasks that represent varying levels of challenge ranging from very easy to extremely difficult (Bandura, 2006b). After the educators examined the instrument, two items were added to increase the range of the tasks. Both items asked about reading simplified versions of Spanish novels. The first asked about a simplified version whose

audience was foreign language learners and the second asked about a simplified novel whose audience was young, native-Spanish-speaking children. Then, the revised instrument was pilot tested with three novice language learners not involved in the current study.

The novice language learners who piloted the SRSEQ were two first year Latin students and one Spanish student who was just beginning his second year of language study. The researcher met individually with each of these language learners. The researcher and the language learner read and discussed how the language learner interpreted each of the items on the pilot questionnaire. The items that the students found unclear or interpreted differently from the researcher's intended meaning were revised with the help of the language learners until the learners' and the researcher's understandings mirrored each other (Hildebrandt, 2006). The modifications were minor. The most significant issue identified was the students' concern that their friends did not send them letters; therefore, item 9 was altered to read, "If a friend sends me text messages or writes me letters written in Spanish, I can read and understand them." Some phrases were also changed: "grammatically correct" to "written correctly" and "previous knowledge" to "what I already know." Also, the original item 'I can read and understand magazine articles about sports, television, or movies that are written in Spanish,' became "I can read and understand articles from Spanish magazines like *People En Español* and *Sports Illustrated Spanish Edition* as long as the articles are about activities I like such as sports, television, or movies." These changes worked to ensure students would understand each item as well as culturally connect to it on a personal level.

Finally, during the first six weeks of the school year, the researcher introduced the students, through activities, to some of the text types mentioned in the SRSEQ. In this way, students experienced some of the linguistic demands required to read multiple-choice test

questions, picture books, and newspapers, for example. Specifically, all students participated in a district-mandated multiple-choice test. This pre-test did not affect students' grades but did allow students to experience reading multiple-choice questions in the target language. Students also worked in groups to answer questions about a Spanish language newspaper. Among other topics, students were asked to identify where the newspaper had been published (Miami, FL), what currency a customer would use to pay for the items advertised in a Publix supermarket ad, (U.S. dollar), in what month the paper had been published (June), and the theme of one of the articles (the Clinton campaign). The researcher also read to the students the Spanish version of the picture book *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss. Through these activities, students were introduced to the linguistic demands of reading in a second language and better able to provide a valid measure of their sense of Spanish reading self-efficacy.

Reliability of the revised instrument. To verify the reliability of the SRSEQ data, the researcher pilot tested a draft of the questionnaire with the novice level Spanish students he taught during the 2016-17 school year. The current study took place during the 2017-18 school year. Following the methods used by Swanson (2014), the researcher calculated the reliability coefficient, Cronbach Alpha, for the original component skill and task subscales, which were 0.85 and 0.89 respectively. The SRSEQ was later revised as described in the validity section. As part of that revision process, the skill items and task items were combined into a single, 18-item scale rather than the original two subscales. For the current study, the Cronbach Alpha of the pre- SRSEQ was 0.94 and for the post-SRSEQ it was 0.93. Henson (2001) explained that internal reliability measures, such as the Cronbach Alpha, are important as they indicate to what extent the instrument is measuring a single concept. Furthermore, Henson indicated that if internal reliability were below 0.70, then the data would become invalid, while scores at .90 and

above would be sufficiently strong to allow the data to be used in making high-stakes decisions such as eligibility for graduation or grade level retention. While the study utilized the SRSEQ to measure target language reading self-efficacy, the National Spanish Exam (NSE) served as the measure of linguistic competence.

National Spanish Exam. The National Spanish Exam is described as an online, assessment given to middle and high school students, and approximately 4,000 teachers in the United States voluntarily give the assessment each year (National Spanish Exam, n.d.). The NSE is a standards-based assessment that seeks to evaluate both what students know and what they can do. The assessment is given in two 45-minute sessions: the first session assesses the students' knowledge of vocabulary and grammar while the second measures their reading and listening comprehension. Participation in the NSE costs the students \$7.00: \$4.00 to the NSE national office and \$3.00 to the local chapter of The American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP). The study location also required the payment of a \$2.00 fee to cover the costs the school incurred in collecting money and providing medals for those students who earned recognition. For students who requested financial assistance, the researcher covered the exam cost. All students enrolled in the researcher's classes were required to take the NSE, and the researcher absorbed the expense for any student needing financial assistance independent of their participation in the study.

The NSE does not publish validity information other than to explain that the exam is based on the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2014). However, it does publish reliability information for each exam year. The NSE defines reliability as the "degree to which the test gives consistent results each time it is given" (National Spanish Exam, n.d.), and uses the Kuder-Richardson 21 formula

to calculate the reliability coefficients for each level of the exam for each year. For the 2018 administration of the NSE the reliability coefficient for the first-year exam for students with only classroom experience and for students with outside experience was 0.99. None of the study participants were required to take the NSE at the bilingual level.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection began during the seventh week of the 2017-18 school year. The researcher waited until the seventh week for the following reasons:

1. Student schedules were constantly changing during the first six weeks of the school year. At the six-week mark, the school district finalized student enrollment counts and teacher placements. Until the six-week mark, teachers could be transferred due to school enrollments being too high or too low. A teacher transfer results in mass schedule changes, so the data collection did not begin until teacher placements and student schedules had been finalized;

2. The participants, as first-year students, needed time to begin learning Spanish so that they could have a basis upon which to make efficacy judgements; and

3. To protect the validity of the SRSEQ results, students needed exposure to some of the types of texts asked about on the SRSEQ.

During the six weeks prior to the students completing the pre-SRSEQ, students participated in several Spanish reading activities that exposed them to various Spanish-language reading materials. Such exposure was necessary because during the 2016-17 pilot test, it was clear that some students were unaware of the cognitive demands of reading in a second language, and others did not understand the difference between an authentic newspaper and a textbook passage made to look like a newspaper or magazine article. Therefore, during the first six weeks of the school year, the researcher exposed the participants to some of the Spanish texts asked

about on the SRSEQ. Specifically, the researcher read *Los Huevos Verdes con Jamón (Green Eggs and Ham)* by Dr. Seuss to the students, showed them a Spanish language newspaper, and had them complete the district mandated multiple-choice pre-test. These activities permitted students to experience the Spanish language and to realize that they could glean some information, though imperfectly, from Spanish language texts. The exposure also helped students better understand the linguistic demands entailed in the tasks asked about on the SRSEQ.

During the seventh week of the school year, students went to one of the school computer labs and completed the pre-SRSEQ. The questionnaire was disseminated using a Google Form. The students, upon entering the computer lab logged onto a computer and opened the instructor's course web page. This page is available only to the researcher's current students. A link to the SRSEQ had been placed on this site. Students followed the link and, with the survey open, the researcher read the directions aloud as students read them silently. Then, the students completed the demographic information and rated on a scale of 1 (low confidence) to 100 (high confidence) how confident they were that they could complete each of the 18 skills and tasks described. In this study, a 1 indicated certainty that the student could not complete the task and a 100 represented a perfect confidence in his or her ability.

Ten weeks prior to the end of the school year and prior to completing the NSE, the students completed the post-SRSEQ as a post-measure of their reading self-efficacy. The previously described procedures were repeated with the post-SRSEQ. Ten weeks prior to the end of the school year, the students also completed the NSE. The students' NSE composite percentile scores served as achievement measures for the correlational portion of this study.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical analyses were performed on the sample groups to obtain a clear understanding of the population. Measures of central tendency (e.g., means, medians) and dispersion (e.g., standard deviations, ranges) as well as an analysis of variance were computed. Furthermore, a correlational analysis was conducted to assess the strength of the relationship between the Spanish reading self-efficacy of novice language learners and general Spanish language achievement.

Pre-SRSEQ. Google Forms automatically collected the students' responses and presented them in a Google spreadsheet. The researcher downloaded this Google spreadsheet as an Excel file. Using Excel functions, the researcher calculated the mean of each students' responses to the 18 items on the pre-SRSEQ.

After calculating the mean of the ratings each student had given, the researcher uploaded the data on the Excel spreadsheet to SPSS 25. The researcher calculated the reliability coefficient and, after ensuring that the data met the required assumption, conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) at the $\alpha < .05$ confidence level to determine if there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups at the beginning of the study.

Post-SRSEQ. Ten weeks prior to the end of the school year and prior to taking the NSE the participants completed the post-SRSEQ. The purpose of the post-SRSEQ analysis was to determine if one of the two types of texts, personalized or publisher provided, was more successful at increasing the Spanish reading self-efficacy of novice-level Spanish students.

The SRSEQ composite score, the mean of the task ratings, again served as the unit of analysis. The researcher conducted statistical analysis to verify that the assumptions were met. The researcher found that the assumption homogeneity of variance was not met, but the group

sizes were equal; therefore, the researcher conducted both a parametric and non-parametric ANOVA at the $\alpha < 0.05$ confidence level.

National Spanish Exam. Spanish language students across the country take the NSE 10 weeks prior to the end of the school year. The NSE provides each student with scores in vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension. It also provides each student with a composite percentile ranking. For this study, the composite percentile score served as the measure of overall Spanish achievement. All participants completed the NSE over two days during the one-week test window. When scores were received from AATSP, the researcher entered the students' percentile cumulative scores into SPSS. At this point, the researcher removed all identifying markers from the data as required by IRB. Then, the researcher conducted a correlation analysis to identify a potential relationship between Spanish reading self-efficacy and overall Spanish linguistic competence.

Reading Intervention. The control group and the experimental group participated in identical types of reading activities during the 20-week experiment. Both groups interacted with the texts in a manner that followed the procedures for extensive reading except for self-selection and reading in large quantities as outlined by Day and Bamford (2002).

The control group. The control group read texts that were in the district-provided, *Avancemos 1* textbook. In the *Avancemos* language program, each unit has a video that follows a group of native, Spanish-speakers as they discuss or participate in activities centered around the unit's theme. As an introduction to the unit's vocabulary, grammar, and the video, the textbook provides an introductory, abbreviated video script. This script is divided into three sections and each is accompanied by one illustration that helps establish the setting or hints at the text's theme. The textbook provided the vocabulary, grammatical structures, and the themes of

classroom instruction; however, the actual textbook was not utilized during the course.

Therefore, students had not encountered these reading passages or watched these videos outside of the study context.

The participants in the control group were introduced to the vocabulary and grammar and had many opportunities to practice with them prior to encountering the publisher-provided texts. The reading opportunities were structured to be identical to those experienced by the experimental group. Prior to reading the publisher-provided texts, the text's theme was discussed, and students were asked to make predictions about text content based on the theme and the images. Students then scanned the text for words or passages that were incomprehensible. These difficult passages were discussed to ensure text comprehension.

Studies have shown that readers frequently dedicate so much of their cognitive capacity to the decoding process, that the mental resources needed for comprehending the text are not available (Smith, 1973; A. Zhao et al., 2016). According to Sweller's (1988) cognitive load theory, cognitive resources are dedicated first to the primary task, in this case the decoding process, and then any remaining resources become available for the secondary task of comprehension. With this reality in mind, the researcher designed the reading activity to limit the initial cognitive demands and provide repetition to help develop automaticity of the reading process. The actual reading was completed in partners. The first student would decode, read aloud, a small portion of text, then the partner would interpret that text and explain what that portion of the text had communicated. They would then switch roles. Once a specified portion of text had been read and interpreted, the students would return to the beginning of the section and reread the text. With each reencounter, the cognitive demands of decoding and interpreting would diminish, thereby allowing the reader to decode and comprehend simultaneously. While

this activity's structure may appear to fall back on the old grammar-translation model, it is through separating the decoding and the comprehension processes that the reader can develop decoding automaticity, thereby lowering the cognitive demands of the decoding process. It is only after the diminishing of the cognitive demands of the decoding process that the reader has the cognitive resources required to comprehend the text.

To ensure that all students were scaffolded in their reading practice, every seven to ten minutes, students changed partners. This rotating of partners ensured that weak readers were never together for extensive periods of time and that all students worked with stronger readers during at least a portion of the designated reading time. The reading partners followed this decoding/interpreting process until they had read the entire reading and the period had ended. Within this reading activity, every student was required to focus their efforts on both the decoding and the comprehension of target language texts; furthermore, since each partner was responsible to decode and interpret about half of each reading passage, the participants were required to focus on the message of the texts thereby promoting target language acquisition. It is through comprehension of messages that students acquire language (Horst, 2005; Krashen, 1985, 1989, 2002; Krashen & Terrell, 1983)

The experimental group. This group participated in a very similar reading process; however, the texts they read were personalized to the students. To assist in personalizing the texts, each participant completed an interest inventory. The inventory gave the students a list of famous people and popular activities that the students ranked from 1 to 100 where the ranking of 100 was the activity or person the student was most interested in, and that of 99 was the second most interesting until the last item was given a ranking of 1, indicating it was the least interesting to the student. If a student was unfamiliar with a person or activity, he or she was told to cross

out that item and replace it with one they found more to their liking. Many students changed several items to make the inventory better fit their interests. A copy of the interest inventory is available in Appendix D.

The first personalized text presented vocabulary and grammar that was already becoming familiar to the students. They had had seven complete weeks of Spanish language instruction. The text centered on introductions and expressions like “Me gusta + verb” (I like to + verb) and “Yo soy + adjective” (I am + adjective). The text provided information about several students as the lack of linguistic competence prevented the students from understanding a more complex text about just one or two people. These first personalized texts might be described as a slice of life or as an introduction.

To create the personalized texts the researcher took photographs of all of the students in front of a green screen. Then using Adobe Photoshop, the researcher removed the green background and created from each image a .gif file. The .gif files allow a transparent background so that the image can be incorporated into a different background. Other formats such as .jpeg require a background, so a white box will surround any image and make it impossible to incorporate the student’s image with that of another photograph. Using Adobe Photoshop, the researcher prepared images of the students that could later be inserted into various Internet images that contained people participating in the activities the students had identified as enjoyable. The Internet images were selected because the activities involved aligned with activities that the students had identified as interesting on their interest inventories or in class discussions. Furthermore, the people in the images also matched the students’ in race and, to the best of the researcher’s ability, in skin tone. The researcher always attempted to make the

images look as natural and real as his skills allowed. His lack of skill, was also a lively aspect of each personalized text.

To create the actual texts, the researcher placed the pictures taken from the internet into a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation. He then incorporated the student's image into the Internet photograph. As a novice user of Adobe's Photoshop, the functions of PowerPoint were much simpler to manipulate and allowed the student's image to easily be resized and placed into the image. The same functions are available in Adobe Photoshop; however, the use of layers was a more complex process and the learning curve was significant. The researcher would group the images to facilitate any needed editing, movement, or resizing. The researcher then placed the text beside or under the image.

In selecting Internet images to pair with the student images, the researcher considered the Internet images' content: the background, the activity, and the body's position. Additionally, the researcher's concerns centered on respecting the students' feelings and beliefs, presenting the student as successful, complying with school standards for dress and behavior, and protecting the emotional and physical wellbeing of all students. Furthermore, the researcher felt obligated to ensure that every student enrolled in the two sections that read the personalized texts appeared in at least one story. One of the purposes of personalizing the texts was to create situational motivation that encouraged the students to explore the texts (Alexander, 2006). The researcher's worldview posits that when students feel excluded they lose interest; therefore, the researcher worked to include all students in multiple texts.

The influence the above-mentioned concerns played in the student selection and the text creation process can be illustrated by examining the first story of the second semester. The story was to have taken place over the winter break. The researcher wanted to create a text that would

center on a very quiet and private student. The researcher wanted this student to be one of the main characters of a story because she had not really been in any of the prior stories due to her private nature. It had been difficult to discover her interests. A story involving Santa Claus and the adventing of a Christmas disaster would be so obviously fictitious that such a story could include this student while respecting her desire for privacy. The researcher had the idea of creating a story in which this student would save Christmas by replacing an injured Santa Claus.

The school population is diverse and many students do not share what might be referred to as traditional Christian beliefs. Therefore, to ensure that the students' belief systems were respected, the researcher asked this very private student if her family celebrated Christmas and found out if she considered Santa Claus an acceptable, secular tradition. What he learned made her an ideal person to play the protagonist. However, the male student that the researcher needed to serve as the antagonist came from a family that followed strict nonwestern cultural norms. The researcher had met this student's mother earlier in the school year. The mother wore a burqa and explained that she did not shake hands with men for cultural and religious reasons. The researcher wanted to use this male student as the antagonist, because a central Internet image that would illustrate the story had a young boy in a Santa suit looking over his shoulder. The only photograph the researcher had of a student looking over his shoulder was of this young man. The researcher quietly described the character and the plot line and asked this student if playing such a character would be acceptable to him and to his family. The student liked the character and said that it would be okay to cast him in the role. So, the very quiet young lady was cast as the youth that saved Christmas while the young man whose traditions did not include Christmas played the antagonist. Nine months after reading this story, the participant who was cast as the

antagonist, returned to visit the researcher and commented that he missed the personalized stories and that this particular story had been his favorite.

The other stories were less sensitive in nature. One of the students played a Greek goddess in the school play and another was a member of the school cross-country team. The characters these students played were actresses and runners. During a rain storm, a third student entered the classroom and stood in front of the green screen and performed an impromptu weather report. Consequently, she grew up to be a famous weather person in one of the stories.

The personalized texts were printed in color and spiral bound. Card stock was used to create the book covers. The early stories each contained a title page, a glossary page, and then the story. Words in the glossary were typically bolded in the body of the text so that students could easily identify these words. Later stories did not contain the glossary as the reading practice began to include using context to guess the meaning of unknown words. Every time a personalized text was distributed to students, they immediately searched the pictures to find out which students had been featured in the story. Typically, they would tell any students featured in the story to look at their pictures. From the comments made during the initial exploration, it became clear that the image quality was important to the readers. The researcher's skill in using Photoshop increased as the study progressed, and the students were always interested in discussing the quality of the photo editing. The story-creation process became more time consuming and demanding as the researcher worked to illustrate the stories with more intricate images. In the first books, only the faces or heads of students had been pasted onto the Internet images. By the final story, the students were more fully integrated into the images, and some students were often placed in the image's background or behind furniture.

The reading process for the personalized texts was identical to that of the publisher-provided texts. The students, after exploring the images and laughing at the researcher's photo editing skills, would glance through the glossary and then scan the text very quickly. They were looking for words they thought they did not know and which were not cognates. Frequently, the students asked for the meaning of cognates; however, the researcher would simply ask what the word looked like. In this manner, many word patterns such as the suffixes "-dad" and "-ción" were introduced to students. After scanning the text, the students' partner read sharing the decoding and comprehending tasks. The partner reading process used by the experimental group was identical to the one used by the control group.

The time dedicated to reading the publisher-provided texts and personalized texts was always equal. One class period of 52 minutes was dedicated to the reading of each text. While the number of words in each text was not counted, the time dedicated to reading, and the style of the instruction was kept identical between the control and experimental groups. Furthermore, neither group was assessed on the reading passages. The researcher circulated among the students, encouraged on task behaviors, asked questions to improve comprehension, and listened to the students' decoding and text interpretations. However, none of the study reading passages were ever formally assessed. The principles of extensive reading suggest that reading should not be assessed but should be its own reward (Day & Bamford, 1998, 2002; Krashen, 2004).

The students who were featured in each story were given a copy of the story to take home. These students frequently shared the stories with their parents. They would also share their parents' comments about the story. Parent comments were always very positive.

The reading intervention and the data sources of self-efficacy. The reading activities were designed not only to require practice in both decoding and interpreting, but also to provide

the participants with data from all four of Bandura's (1997) potential sources of self-efficacy data. The participants decoded and interpreted the texts during the reading activity. This provided them with competency data in the form of mastery experiences. The participants also listened as their partners read or interpreted the texts. This portion of the activity provided the participants with vicarious experiences, or models of target language reading. These models would be among the most powerful because the participants would consider at least some of their partners if not all of them to be similar to themselves in ability and language experience. The participants also received verbal persuasion in the form of feedback from partners or the researcher as the activity took place. Finally, while the reading activities were designed to maintain a low effective filter by having students work with only one other partner, the nervousness or calmness the students experienced would provide data from the source that Bandura labeled physiological state. Therefore, each of the eight reading activities produced data connected to all four of Bandura's identified sources of self-efficacy data, which the participants could draw upon to formulate their sense of SE in reading in the target language.

4. FINDINGS

Text type and Spanish Reading Self-Efficacy

This chapter presents the statistical analysis that the researcher conducted to answer the two research questions. To address the first question, the researcher examined the data to ensure it met the required assumptions and then utilized the appropriate analysis of variance tests. The second portion of the chapter presents the findings of the correlational study that was completed to answer the second research question.

Prior to any analysis, the researcher established the reliability of the pre-SRSEQ data. To measure reliability, the researcher calculated the Cronbach Alpha. The coefficient was 0.94, which indicated that the data were highly reliable and measured the single concept of Spanish reading self-efficacy (Henson, 2001). With reliability established, the researcher analyzed the pre- and post-SRSEQ data to answer the first research question.

Comparing means to establish similarity of groups. To answer the first research question regarding to what extent the reading of personalized texts affected the novice language learners' level of SE in reading in the target language, the researcher needed to establish that the level of Spanish reading self-efficacy reported by the control and experimental groups were not statistically significantly different at the beginning of the study.

The researcher calculated the descriptive statistics on the pre-SRSEQ, which are shown in Table 2. Then, the researcher verified that the data met the two assumptions of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA): the data is normally distributed, and the variances are equal. The data did meet these assumptions.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics for the pre-SRSEQ ($N = 38$)

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI for <i>M</i>			
					<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
Control	19	53.06	20.04	4.60	43.40	62.72	21.33	84.89
Experimental	19	56.76	20.55	4.71	46.85	66.67	19.17	95.56
Total	38	54.91	20.11	3.26	48.30	61.52	19.17	95.56

To verify normality, the researcher conducted the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality at the $p < .05$ significance level. As shown on table 3, the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality resulted in a p value of 0.13 for the control group and 0.52 for the experimental group. This finding confirmed that the data for the pre-SRSEQ were close enough to normally distributed for both the control and experimental groups

Table 3
Shapiro Wilk test of normality

	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Pre-SRSEQ—Control	.93	19	.13
Pre-SRSEQ—Experiment	.96	19	.52

The researcher also tested the equal variance assumption using the homogeneity of variances test, the Levene Statistic. The pre-SRSEQ produced a Levene Statistic based on the mean with a significance value of $p = .997$. This finding indicated that the data also met the homogeneity of variance assumption.

These findings indicated that the data met the assumptions required to conduct the one-way ANOVA. The researcher conducted the one-way ANOVA on the pre-SRSEQ data to determine if a statistically significant difference existed between the levels of Spanish reading self-efficacy of the control and experimental groups prior to the beginning of the study.

The one-way analysis showed that the difference between groups was not statistically significant [$F(1,36) = .31, p = .578$] as shown in Table 4.

Table 4
ANOVA Pre-SRSEQ; n=38

	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	129.54	1	129.54	.31	.578
Within Groups	14831.50	36	411.99		
Total	14961.04	37			

Based on this finding, the researcher considered the two treatment groups to be similar enough to allow such analysis to proceed (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017).

Agresti and Franklin (2013) also suggested that the sample should be random; and this study used a convenience sample. However, in the study, prior to recruiting any participants, it was determined that the two sections of Spanish Level I serving the largest number of students classified as gifted and talented would be designated as the control group. Establishing the assignment procedures prior to meeting the potential participants helps limit the selection bias when required to work with a convenience sample (Edwards & Kennedy, 2017).

Reading's influence on SE. Once the post-SRSEQ data had been collected and prior to any other statistical analysis, the researcher verified that reliability of the data by calculating the Cronbach alpha. The coefficient was 0.93 for the post-SRSEQ data. The researcher then calculated a one-way ANOVA to compare the means of the self-efficacy measures of the control and experimental groups. A statistically non-significant finding would indicate that the means were similar enough to occur randomly while a statistically significant finding would suggest that the reading completed by one of the two groups had a greater influence on SE in reading in the target language than did the other. First, descriptive statistics were calculated and are shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Descriptive statistics for the post-SRSEQ data

	N	M	SD	SE	95% CI for M		Minimum	Maximum
					LL	UL		
Control	19	63.71	18.67	4.28	54.71	72.71	32.44	91.17
Experimental	19	67.93	11.57	2.65	62.36	73.51	46.05	87.06
Total	38	65.83	15.47	2.51	60.74	70.91	32.44	91.17

The researcher then verified the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance. A Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted, and it verified that the post-SRSEQ data were normally distributed for both the control group ($p = .11$) and experimental group ($p = .70$). Such a finding supported the null hypothesis, which was that the data were at least close enough to normally distributed to allow for a one-way ANOVA to be calculated.

The data, however, failed to meet the homogeneity of variance assumption. When the Levene statistic was calculated, it produced a significant Levene statistic ($p = .008$), indicating that the data violated the assumption of homogeneity of variance. However, the number of participants in both the control and the experimental groups were equal ($n = 19$). According to Glass, Peckham, and Sanders (1972), the ANOVA is robust and can withstand the conditions of heterogeneity of variance when sample sizes are equal, as in the current study. Moreover Rogan and Keselman (1977) determined that when the coefficient of variance is small, around 0.20, the probability of committing a Type 1 error is nearly the same as when the assumption of homogeneity of variance is met. With respect to the present study, the coefficients of variance would be considered small given that the statistics for the control group and the experimental group were 0.28 and 0.17 respectively. While Rogan and Keselman determined that the “ANOVA F-test is not robust to all degrees of variance heterogeneity even when sample sizes

are equal” (p. 497), they found that the violation caused Type 1 errors when the variance coefficients were very large (0.80 to 1.38) or the sample sizes were very small ($n \leq 5$).

Based on the findings of these studies, the researcher determined that failing to meet the assumption of homogeneity would not significantly impact the results or increase the likelihood of making a Type 1 error. Thus, the researcher conducted a one-way ANOVA to compare the means of the control and experimental groups and determine if the reading of personalized texts or the reading of publisher-provided texts was more effective at increasing SE in reading in the target language. As shown on Table 6, the ANOVA indicated that the effect of reading personalized texts compared with the reading of publisher provided texts on novice language learners’ SE in reading in the target language was not statistically significant, $F(1,36) = .70, p = 0.407$.

Table 6
ANOVA comparing the effects that reading personalized versus publisher-provided texts have on novice language learners’ SE in reading in the target language.

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Post-SRSEQ	Between Groups	169.57	1	169.57	.70	.407
	Within Groups	8683.82	36	241.22		
	Total	8853.40	37			

With the assumption of homogeneity of variance violated, the researcher also conducted a Welch F test to verify the result of the one-way ANOVA. The Welch’s F test is a robust test and is often considered the test of choice when the homogeneity of variance assumption is violated (Jan & Shieh, 2014; Rogan & Keselman, 1977). As shown in Table7, the Welch test confirmed the non-significant result of the parametric ANOVA, Welch $F(1, 30.04) = .70, p = .40$.

Table 7
Welch ANOVA; n = 38

		Statistic ^a	df1	df2	Sig.
Pre-RSEQ	Welch	.31	1	35.98	.578
Post SRSEQ	Welch	.70	1	30.04	.408

a. Asymptotically F distributed.

As the results of the parametric ANOVA and the Welch F Test both produced non-statistically significant results no post hoc tests were not conducted.

In summary, the finding from the one-way ANOVA indicated that no statistically significant difference existed between the levels of SE in reading in the target language of the participants in the experimental and control groups.

The Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Language Proficiency

Turning to the second research question, which asked to what extent the novice language learner's sense of self-efficacy in target language reading translated into greater overall second language competence as measured by the National Spanish Exam. To answer this question, the researcher conducted a correlational analysis to determine if a relationship existed between the level of novice language learners' reported SE in reading in the target language and their overall communicative competence as measured by the NSE.

The Pearson correlation was not used as the statistical tool for this study because it requires that several assumptions be met, and the NSE data did not meet two of these assumptions: 1) that the data must be normally distributed and 2) that the data be free of outliers. Therefore, the researcher used a non-parametric tool, the Spearman rank order correlation, for this portion of the study. The Spearman rank order correlation is robust against outliers and is the tool of choice when data is not normally distributed (Rosner, 1995).

The first correlational analysis conducted by the researcher sought to identify a potential relationship between all 38 participants' SE in reading in the target language and their linguistic competence independent of their status as members of the control or experimental groups. The researcher found that no statistically significant relationship existed between the SE in reading in the target language of novice language learners and their overall linguistic competence as measured by the NSE ($n = 38$, $r_s = .21$, $p = .20$).

The researcher then explored potential associations that might exist within subgroups. First, he sought potential associations between SE in reading in the target language and the overall linguistic competence of the control and experimental groups. The researcher calculated the Spearman rank order correlation and identified a weak yet significant correlation for the participants from the control group ($n = 19$, $r_s = .49$, $p = .033$). In the case of the participants from the experimental group, no statistically significant correlation was identified ($n = 19$, $r_s = -.26$, $p = .274$).

Finally, the researcher conducted Spearman's rank-order correlations based on gender. These findings, males ($n = 18$, $r_s = .11$, $p = .665$) and females: ($n = 20$, $r_s = .31$, $p = .192$), were also not statistically significant. Finally, the researcher examined how socioeconomic status might influence potential associations. The participants were divided into two groups: those participants who received free or reduced lunch and those participants who did not. For the participants who did not receive meal assistance ($n = 22$, $r_s = .03$, $p = .889$) no statistically significant associations were identified. The results were also not statistically significant for the participants who did receive meal assistance ($n = 16$, $r_s = .34$, $p = .192$).

The data collected from the National Spanish Exam were not normally distributed. Therefore, a Pearson correlation analysis could not be conducted. Instead the Spearman's rank-

order correlation was conducted. While the data were divided into several different demographic categories, the only statistically significant association identified was a weak association between SE in reading in the target language and overall second language competence for the control group ($n = 19$, $r_s = .49$, $p = .033$). That association just failed to reach the moderate level.

The following chapter will examine these findings in the context of existent self-efficacy and language acquisition research. That chapter will also examine these findings within the context of the reading habits of the participants, particularly in how these patterns changed during the course of the study.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents a summary of the study and discusses the statistical conclusions drawn from the findings presented in the previous chapter. Moreover, this chapter seeks to examine these findings within the context of the participants' reading environments as well as the context of their reading habits as reported on the pre and post-SRSEQ. Furthermore, this chapter presents a discussion of the implications for action and recommendations for further research.

Summary of the study

Aliteracy is a growing problem among high school students as more and more students who can read choose not to do so. The purpose of this study was to address the issue of aliteracy among novice, Spanish-as-a-foreign-language students by personalizing the reading texts, thereby providing novice language learners with positive experiences that could increase SE in reading in the target language. Specifically, this study sought to answer two questions:

1. To what extent does the reading of personalized texts increase students' SE in reading in the target language?
2. To what extent do increases in SE in reading in the target language translate in greater, overall linguistic competence?

This 20-week study employed a quasi-experimental research design using a between-subjects approach with a pretest and posttest (Edmonds and Kennedy, 2017). The study also used a correlational design to test the association between self-efficacy and student achievement as measured by the percentile scores for the National Spanish Exam.

The SRSEQ was administered through a Google survey to the participants pre- and post-reading intervention. Participants in the control group read texts that were included in the

textbook while participants from the experimental group read personalized texts that were written and illustrated by the researcher. At the end of the study period, all participants took the National Spanish Exam. The researcher conducted statistical analysis and found that there was not a statistically significant difference between the levels of reading self-efficacy of the control and experimental groups ($F(1, 30.04) = .703, p = .408$.) However, the correlational study, conducted using Spearman's rank order correlation indicated that a weak but statistically significant relationship existed between the participants from the control group's general linguistic competence and their reported SE in reading in the target language ($r_s = .49, p = .033$).

The findings in relation to the academic conversation

Research question 1. The statistical analysis conducted to answer the first research question, to what extent does the reading of personalized texts affect the novice language learners' level of self-efficacy in target language reading, found no statistically significant difference in the SE in reading in the target language of the participants who read from the personalized texts when compared with those that read passages from the publisher-provided textbook.

The statistically verified changes in the reported levels of self-efficacy from pre- to post-SRSEQ, 10.65 for the control and 11.17 for the experimental, would be considered statistically identical; however, the target language reading practice occurred in very distinct environments. Qualitative data such as teacher observations, participant comments, and student engagement could have been collected and would have indicated that the personalized texts altered the participants' behavior and promoted reading. While this study did not formally collect such data, conclusions drawn from the statistical findings should consider the reading context.

Within the experimental group, reading behaviors indicated that personalization produced a high degree of interest, especially when compared to the behaviors exhibited by participants reading texts provided by the publisher (Alexander, 2006; Howard & Major, 2004). Participants in the experimental group, and their peers, frequently requested a new personalized text and eagerly awaited their arrival. The experimental group watched for the stacks of personalized reading texts to appear. If they saw anything spiral bound, they asked for a copy before class had even begun. Palpable excitement accompanied the arrival of each new personalized text. The behaviors of those that read the personalized texts indicate that personalization, as was suggested by Piniel and Csizér (2013), enhanced the learning experience by making the reading activities relevant and enjoyable. In contrast, the students reading the publisher-provided texts completed their reading assignments without fanfare, and not one student ever expressed the desire to read anything from the textbook.

Participants from the experimental group attacked every text in the same manner. First, they searched the illustrations for representations of themselves. Then they began disseminating their findings. Jackson (not his real name) you're on page eight. As soon as students had identified and discussed each featured individual, they began to discuss the quality of the images. The researcher's skill at manipulating photos became more and more important as the study progressed. The students diligently analyzed the quality of the images and announced how well the activities, clothing etc. portrayed their tastes and personality. The interest that students demonstrated, propelled them to utilize pre-reading strategies such as skimming, predicting and comparing. A. Zhao et al. (2016) explained that more proficient second language readers were able to employ top-down and bottom-up reading strategies. Novice language learners, by definition, would lack the proficiency necessary to independently employ such strategies;

however, the illustrations within the personalized texts, provide a bridge between the novice language learners' linguistic competence and the reading texts, thereby allowing the learners to naturally and independently apply their personal schema to the text.

In contrast, the participants from the control group frequently avoided applying reading strategies unless the instruction required them to give details based on their application. These students appeared to want to complete the assigned reading task and move on to something else.

The excitement that surfaced as the participants from the experimental group examined the images carried over into the reading. Comprehending the text's message became important. Participants constantly compared the characters from the stories to themselves and their peers. From a psycholinguistic perspective, the students in the experimental group possessed a strong repertoire of background knowledge and experiences that they could use to support their reading of the personalized texts. Furthermore, the fictional portrayals that the texts presented, provided the readers with interest and excitement (Alexander, 2006; Smith, 2004) and even some of the enjoyment Krashen (2004) and Piniel and Csizér (2013) suggested helps acquire language.

While the SE in reading in the target language of the two groups was identical, the structure of the reading activities may have provided the members of the control group greater opportunities to strengthen their SE in reading in the target language. The group assignment process placed the two Spanish Level 1 sections which served the most gifted students in the control group. While the number of gifted and talented participants in the experimental group was nearly equal to the number of gifted and talented participants in the control group, the learning environments were very different. Nearly 33% of the students in the control environment had earned the classification of gifted based on their previous academic performance. From a social cognitive viewpoint, the greater number of gifted students may have

provided stronger models of academic success and natural support for the reading instruction. Bandura (1997) suggested that vicarious sources of efficacy are strongest when the observer considers the model as someone like him/herself. Furthermore, the structure of partner reading would have allowed students to interact with these academically stronger students during every mastery reading experience. Moreover, the larger number of academically strong students would have provided a natural support system to help students develop decoding and comprehension skills. Such a system could have provided more concrete feedback that would have served as a source of social persuasion. The reading models and feedback provided by academically strong peers, while serving as sources of self-efficacy, could have helped improve the language learner's reading competence thereby providing positive mastery experiences as well. These contextual factors may have supported the self-efficacy development experienced by the control group's participants in ways that were not as readily available to members of the experimental group.

The experimental group's learning context was made up of significantly fewer gifted students, thereby providing these participants fewer models and a potentially weaker source of scaffolding to ensure success during the mastery experiences.

While the statistical evidence suggests that neither text type was statistically superior at increasing SE in reading in the target language, teacher observations of student engagement suggest that the reading of personalized texts was motivating to students. This study did not set out to measure the motivational influence that personalized texts might possess, which is a potential area of future study. However, the researcher had predicted that personalized texts would create situational interest (Alexander, 2006), that would provide motivation for reading in the target language. While the findings about the levels of reading self-efficacy were not

statistically significant, the changes in reading behavior reported by the participants supports the need to examine the statistical findings in conjunction with the reading context. The participants who read the personalized texts reported interesting changes in their reading habits. The percentage of participants who reported reading a book during the previous 30 days grew abundantly for the experimental group. While Table 8 shows that the percentage of students who read a book within the past week and within the past 30 days was identical for both the experimental and the control groups; this change represented an increase of only 10.5% for the control group but a 26.3% increase for the experimental group. Additionally, for the control

Table 8
Percentage of participants who read at least one book during the given period.

	Pre-SRSEQ		Post-SRSEQ	
	Control (n = 19)	Experimental (n = 19)	Control (n = 19)	Experimental (n = 19)
Within the last 7 days	21.1	26.3	52.6	52.6
Within the last 30 days	52.6	31.6	31.6	31.6
Within the last 6 months	10.5	26.3	0	5.3
Within the last year	10.5	10.5	5.3	5.3
More than 1 year	5.3	5.3	10.5	5.3

group, the shift from reading less frequently to reading more frequently occurred mainly among those participants that would have been considered frequent readers. It should also be noted that among the control group there was also an increase in the percentage of participants who had not read for pleasure within the past year.

In the experimental group, the major shift in pleasure reading occurred among the participants who had not read a book for pleasure within the past month, but who had read one within the past six months. The data suggested that all but one of the participants who had placed themselves in this category on the pre-SRSEQ had read at least one book for pleasure within the previous month. Furthermore, among the participants who, on the pre-SRSEQ, had

demonstrated tendencies towards aliteracy, those who had not read a book for pleasure within the past six months, at least one student now self-reported more recent experiences with pleasure reading.

The growth in pleasure reading reported by members of the experimental group is also supported by the participants’ responses to the question “In the past month, how many books have you read?” As table 9 shows, within the control group the changes in reading frequency were that one student had joined the group of nonreaders and one student had read extensively, four books or more.

Table 9
Number of books read in within the past 30 days.

Number of books read	Pre-SRSEQ		Post-SRSEQ	
	Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental
6 or more	0	1	0	2
4 to 5	0	3	1	2
2 to 3	8	6	8	10
1	9	7	7	5
0	2	2	3	0

During the same 30-day period, the data collected from the experimental group indicates an increase in book reading. The number of students reading extensively, over four books during the month, remained constant while the participants who had previously reported no book reading on the pre-SRSEQ had all read at least one book. Every participant from the experimental group reported reading at least one book. Additionally, the number of participants that reported reading two to three books during the previous month grew by 67%. The growth in the number of books read, is significant, not because of the percentage of increase is large, but because the participants reporting increases in their reading are the ones who had reported reading one or fewer books during the month prior to completing the pre-SRSEQ. The data, in

the case of the experimental group, suggest that several participants increased the amount of reading they completed, which supports the claim that among the experimental group all participants increased or maintained their previous levels of book reading.

The statistical analysis indicated that the increases in the SE in reading in the target language of the control and experimental groups were not statistically different. However, the responses the participants provided about their reading habits indicate that the changes in the quantity of reading completed by the experimental group was larger than that of the control group. Also, the researcher observed significant differences in behavior between the members of the control and experimental groups during the reading intervention. The control group simply completed the reading tasks, but they never demonstrated any interest in the text nor did they present behaviors that would have indicated that they looked forward to the activity. In contrast, the experimental group demonstrated a strong motivation to engage with the texts and the illustrations.

Research question 2. The second research question sought to identify a potential association between SE in reading in the target language and the overall linguistic competence of novice language learners as measured by the National Spanish Exam. The data did not meet the assumptions of the Pearson correlation; therefore, Spearman's rank order correlation was used to measure the relationship between SE in reading in the target language and linguistic competence. The correlational study found one weak, yet statistically significant relationship between the control group's level of SE in reading in the target language and their overall linguistic competence as measured by the National Spanish Exam ($n = 19$, $r_s = .49$, $p = .033$).

No other statistically significant relationships were identified between the SE in reading in the target language of the participants and their language competence. Moreover, no

statistically significant relationship was identified between the SE in reading in the target language and linguistic competence when the participants were divided by gender, or when they were divided by socioeconomic status.

Previous research has indicated that self-efficacy is a strong predictor of performance (Bandura, 1997; Britner & Pajares, 2006; Mills et al., 2006; Pajares, 1996). Therefore, one would expect that a strong sense of SE in reading in the target language would translate into strong reading performance. Furthermore, the monitor hypothesis suggests that language is acquired incidentally through reading (Krashen, 1989, 2004; Smith, 2004); therefore, it would be expected that stronger readers would acquire more language. However, for the novice language learners participating in this study, the heavier cognitive demands of target language reading (Mikulec, 2015; Shrum & Glisan, 2010) may have prevented them from acquiring extensive amounts of the target language through reading.

Furthermore, Day and Bamford (1998, 2002) and Krashen (2004) promoted the argument that large quantities of reading were necessary to incidentally acquire vocabulary and grammar. This study, while it did follow many of the principles of extensive reading as outlined by Day and Bamford and explained by Krashen, provided students with only eight personalized or publisher-provided, extensive-reading style activities. The limited number of reading opportunities may help explain why significant correlations were not identified. In the book flood study, Elley and Mangubhai (1983) provided their participants with 250, high-interest books, and after eight months, the participants were progressing at twice the normal rate. Additionally, Elley and Mangubhai measured their participants' linguistic development after two years of extensive reading. So not only did this study not provide enough reading opportunities, but the results might not be visible after only 20 weeks. Alexander's (2006) lifespan

developmental perspective on reading suggests that reading skills develop from womb to tomb and that this development unfolds in multiple stages. This perspective also supports the need for additional time to acquire the linguistic skills that blossom as one reads. Furthermore, Teachers who choose to produce personalized materials are limited by time and resources; therefore, it may be wise to combine personalized texts with other high interest readings to ensure students have sufficient reading materials to promote greater self-efficacy development and greater language acquisition.

The researcher was unable to locate empirical research that specifically investigated the use of personalized texts to promote target language reading self-efficacy, with the intent to increase overall linguistic competence. However, Mills et al. (2006) studied the influence of reading self-efficacy on reading proficiency among intermediate level, university, French students. They found that reading self-efficacy predicted French reading proficiency. Among their participants, those that considered themselves to be efficacious readers were more likely to be proficient readers of French. However, the participants in the current study were novice language learners at the high school level. The study sought to identify the relationship between SE in reading in the target language and overall linguistic competence. For the control group, a significant, yet weak relationship was identified. Mills et al.'s study focused on French reading proficiency rather than general French language competence. However, they determined that French reading self-efficacy was a good predictor of French reading proficiency. By contrast, the current study found that SE in reading in the target language only weakly predicted overall language competence as measured by the NSE for the participants in the control group. For all other groups SE in reading in the target language was not able to predict language competence.

This finding may be due to the novice language learners' lack of sufficient linguistic competence. It is possible that language learners need to achieve a minimal level of competence before they can incidentally acquire vocabulary and grammar from reading. They simply may not have developed the language competence needed to allow them to effectively acquire language through the limited exposure this study provided. Readers need to understand 98% of the words in a text to effectively infer the meaning of unknown words (Hsueh-chao & Nation, 2000). Moreover, Nation (2006) demonstrated what is required to comprehend text by dividing the British National Corpus into groups of 1,000-word families based on the word-family's frequency. For example, in the following passage from *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Nation indicated to which of the 1,000-word-families each word belonged. Proper nouns are labeled 15. Unlabeled words fall within the first 1,000 most frequently used word families.

“¹⁵Constance, his wife, was a ¹⁰ruddy, country-looking girl with ²soft ²brown ²hair and ⁵sturdy body, and ²slow movements, full of ²unusual ²energy. She had big, wondering ³eyes, and a ²soft ³mild ²voice, and seemed just to have come from her ³native village” (p. 68).

This passage demonstrates that reading in a second language may require the novice language learner to be familiar with words from several of the 1,000-word families. High-frequency words may easily remain unknown to novice language learners. Nation (2014) suggested that for readers to encounter the majority of the second 1,000-word families often enough to potentially acquire them, they would need to read over 171,000 running words. Moreover, to encounter most of the third 1,000-word families frequently enough for acquisition to occur, the learner would need to read approximately 300,000 running words. This quantity of target-language reading probably is not practical for the novice-level, high school language

course. However, by pairing personalized texts with other high-interest books and assigning student to read outside of class, the quantity of reading may be increased to a level that better supports language acquisition.

Limitations

This study is limited methodologically by three threats to internal validity. These threats are associated with selection bias, maturation, and instrumentation. To combat selection bias, the researcher followed pre-set selection rules. The sections with larger numbers of gifted and talented students were assigned to the control group. Furthermore, the pre-SRSEQ data was used to verify that the groups' levels of self-efficacy were not significantly dissimilar prior to the application of the interventions.

To limit the threat posed by maturation, the researcher worked to maintain the instruction identical in all respects other than the intervention: reading texts provided by the textbook publisher or reading the personalized texts. All participants matured as language learners; however, since the instruction was identical, the differences between groups reflected the influence of the intervention rather than maturation.

Finally, threats associated with the instrument relate to issues of validity and reliability. The researcher took measures to ensure validity: 1) revised a previously validated instrument, 2) had language experts review the instrument's content, 3) and had novice language learners review the instrument's language. To ensure reliability the researcher calculated the reliability coefficient to ensure the data collected measured a single concept. This measure of reliability was excellent.

Additionally, the study is limited by self-reporting as the participants may have reported what they believed the researcher wanted to hear rather than their actual beliefs. To combat this

potential issue, the researcher reminded the participants that there was no correct answer and explained that the most useful data would be an accurate reflection of their feelings and beliefs.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the findings suggest that reading helps novice language learners develop SE in reading in the target language. Also, the reading habits of the participants indicate that those who read the personalized texts reported reading more than they had prior to the study. Furthermore, the researcher observed that the use of personalized reading materials produced positive changes students' reading behavior; the personalized texts illustrated with personalized images organically promoted the use of prereading strategies. While this study was not designed to explore these changes in student reading behavior, the changes are discussed as they represent areas for future study.

Areas for Future Research

In conducting this study, the researcher identified several possible areas of future study. It is possible that one can only incidentally acquire language from reading after reaching a certain linguistic threshold. Therefore, it may be interesting to replicate the current study with participants who are intermediate level language students.

A second potential area of research would be to discover how participants view and interact with the personalized narratives. A qualitative study that explores the social, emotional, and motivational ties that personalized texts provide to language learners could yield valuable insights into the interaction that takes place between a personalized text and the reader. It might be especially valuable to understand how the personalized texts are viewed when the reader is a character in the story versus when one of the reader's peers is featured as a character.

The current study produced two strikingly different reading environments. While neither text type appears to have been statistically superior in helping to develop SE in reading in the

target language, the drastic differences in the reading contexts suggests that personalization creates a connection between the reader and the text that could support language acquisition. The data collected during this study does not allow for an exploration of this connection; however, foreign language teachers might benefit from a qualitative study designed to explore this connection.

Additionally, the personalization process included the use of personalized images to illustrate the stories. These images provided much of the initial excitement experienced by the participants. It may be worthwhile to study the role of personalized images in foreign language reading comprehension.

Finally, the most significant contribution to future research may be the Spanish Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire. This questionnaire could inform reading research in English-as-a-second-language contexts as well as in foreign language contexts. Moreover, the SRSEQ could easily be modified to work in studies involving young readers reading in their native languages as only one task asks about a text designed specifically for a foreign/second language reader. The SRSEQ provides future researchers with a valid and highly reliable means to measure the self-efficacy of novice language learners.

Conclusion

Even though the findings for this study were not statistically significant, the study created two very distinct reading environments. The exploration of the environment created by the reading of personalized texts deserves further exploration. The levels of engagement created by personalization could be capitalized upon to create bridges and help students navigate the difficulties of second language acquisition.

The current study also makes two contributions to future research efforts. First, during the study, the researcher produced a highly reliable and valid tool to measure the novice language learners' SE in reading in the target language. The SRSEQ could easily be modified to measure the novice language learners' level of reading self-efficacy in any language. Second, the study provides empirical research to begin a conversation about the use of personalization in the teaching of foreign language reading. Research on the use of personalization in foreign language reading instruction is scant, and the researcher was not able to locate any research that specifically examined personalization in the context of SE in reading in the target language. This study provides a starting point for this area of research

Moreover, although the findings were not statistically significant, they suggest that comprehensible target-language reading, independent of its source or genre, contributes to SE in reading in the target language. The average level of efficaciousness reported by the participants in both the control and experimental groups at the end of the study was approximately 11% higher than it was at the study's inception. However high-school-aged, novice-language learners' previous reading experiences have provided them with at least nine years of mastery experiences, social persuasion, vicarious learning experiences, and physiological states thereby creating a strong foundation upon which to establish first language (L1) reading self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). This established L1 reading self-efficacy may be a benefit or a hindrance depending on the students' individual levels of L1 reading confidence.

Self-efficacy influences motivation (Bandura, 1997) and determines the level of effort and persistence that one is willing to dedicate to a task (Britner & Pajares, 2006; Usher & Pajares, 2006). Students who experienced high levels of L1 reading self-efficacy expected to be successful at target language reading and engaged fully in reading activities. However, students

with low L1 reading self-efficacy may have begun their first Spanish language course expecting to fail at second language reading. These students may have exhibited the behaviors associated with aliteracy. It was these behaviors that this study hoped to address, and it was the area in which the study produced its strongest successes: increasing the amount of reading reported by the participants from the experimental group.

While the findings for the study were not statistically significant, changes in reading behavior were large. Further qualitative research is needed to determine the extent of the influence personalization has upon students' levels of motivation and persistence in target language reading; the researcher's observations and the anecdotal evidence suggest excitement about reading personalized texts in the target language. Personalization created such strong "situational interest" (Alexander, 2006) that all of the students studying within the experimental context became engaged with the texts and demonstrated a high degree of persistence, even when facing linguistically challenging content. While it is unclear what other factors may have contributed to the increased quantities of reading among the experimental group's participants, the members of this group diminished their participation in alliterate-type behaviors. In contrast, the control group appeared to increase its participation in these behaviors.

Texts cannot influence SE in reading in the target language nor can they promote the development of linguistic competence unless students engage in reading them. In the case of personalized texts, students demonstrated a willingness to interact with the texts and to work to comprehend the texts' messages. However, personalized texts, while promoting high levels of engagement, are labor intensive to create. Some of the texts utilized in this study required between seven and 20 hours to create. This labor limits the quantity of reading materials a teacher can produce. In this study, the number of texts created was insufficient to produce the

level of SE in reading in the target language necessary to predict language competence.

Therefore, the researcher suggests that personalized texts be utilized as stepping stones to more complex texts, such as second language readers designed for language learners or simplified texts that are linguistically appropriate for such learners.

This study's findings were inconclusive as to the ability of SE in reading in the target language to predict overall linguistic competence. While the results were not statistically significant for most groups, a weak correlation existed between the control group's SE in reading in the target language and their overall linguistic competence. This one significant finding suggests that SE in reading in the target language might predict overall linguistic competence, once a yet undetermined linguistic threshold has been achieved.

Novice language learners can build initial linguistic competence through instruction (Krashen, 1981). A portion of that instruction should include reading. It is important to remember that novice learners may lack the competence needed to acquire language through reading alone; however, if they do not develop a habit of foreign language reading, they may become illiterate, never developing the reading comprehension skills essential for incidental language acquisition. Therefore, personalized texts may help novice language learners develop habits of target language reading thereby preparing themselves to more fully acquire the language through future opportunities for incidental acquisition.

The tragedy of illiteracy among foreign language students is its power to undermine language development. While the statistical analysis were not statistically significant, the researcher's observations suggest that "reading may be the most powerful tool we have in language education" (Krashen, 2003).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Denzel es muy popular en la escuela de Parkview. Denzel es popular porque es muy atlético. Denzel es una de las personas más rápidas del mundo. Denzel corre una **milla** en 3 minutos y 40 segundos. Tiene el récord mundial y **es conocido** como el hombre más rápido del mundo. Denzel **debe** correr en los juegos olímpicos de Tokio.



6

El chico se llama Russel Wong. Es otro amigo **mío**. Russel es serio y estudioso. Russel estudia todos los días. Russel es un buen estudiante y le gusta la clase de matemáticas. ¿Te gustan las matemáticas?

A Russel le gusta jugar video juegos. También le gusta preparar la comida. A Russel no le gusta practicar deportes. A él le gusta usar la computadora. ¿Qué te gusta hacer?



Sample Pages of Personalized Texts



Serena no piensa ir a la fiesta. Ella quiere **salir** con su amiga para comprar faldas negras y amarillas. También quiere comprar una chaqueta de jeans. Después de comprar la ropa nueva, Serena y su amiga van a comer pizza.

6

APPENDIX B

Spanish Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire

For each of the tasks below, you will indicate how confident you are that you can complete the described task. You are rating how confident you are that you can do the task right now. This not a measure of past or future performance. It is a measure of how confident you are that you can do each task right now.

A rating of zero would indicate that you are sure you cannot do the task. A rating of 100 indicates that you are absolutely sure you can complete the task. You may give yourself any rating between 0 and 100. No scores below zero or over 100 can be included in the study, so please make sure that zero is the lowest possible score and 100 is the highest possible score.

Novice Low

1. I can read and understand the multiple-choice questions on my Spanish tests.

Novice Mid

2. When reading in Spanish, I can pronounce the individual words.
3. When I am reading in Spanish, I can sound out words that are new to me.
4. I can read a familiar picture book such as *Green Eggs and Ham* that has been translated to Spanish.

Novice High

5. While reading in Spanish, I can tell if a word is a noun, verb, adjective etc.
6. While reading in Spanish, I can recognize the “main points” or theme in a passage or story.
7. While reading in Spanish, I can use what I already know to help me to help me understand new material.
8. I can read a short story assigned in Spanish class.

Intermediate Low

9. I can tell when a Spanish sentence is written correctly.
10. I can read and understand complex, Spanish sentences.
11. If a friend sends me text messages or writes me letters written in Spanish, I can read and understand them.
12. I can read and understand a recipe written in Spanish.

Intermediate Mid

13. When reading in Spanish, I understand the meaning of endings that make words plurals, change verb tense (present, past, future) or are prefixes and suffixes.
14. I can read and understand articles from Spanish magazines like People en Español, Sports Illustrated Spanish edition etc. as long as the articles are about activities I like such as sports, television, or movies.
15. I can read poems written in Spanish.

Intermediate High

16. I can read and understand a Spanish newspaper.
17. I can read a simplified version of a Spanish novel. This simplified version would be specifically for use in Spanish language classes.

Advanced Low

18. I can read a simplified version of a Spanish novel that has been simplified for Spanish-speaking children to read.

APPENDIX C

Reading Self-Efficacy Instrument

Component skill subscale

Directions: Rate how confident you are that you can successfully perform each skill on a scale from zero (no chance) to 100 (complete certainty).

1. Recognize letters
2. Pronounce individual words
3. Recognize parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.)
4. Recognize grammatically correct sentence structure
5. Understand the meaning of plurals, verb tenses, prefixes and suffixes
6. Understand compound and complex sentences
7. Phonetically "sound out" new words
8. Recognize the "main points" or theme in a passage or short story
9. Use previous knowledge to help understand new material (Shell et al., 1989).

Task subscale

Directions: Rate how confident you are that you can successfully perform each task on a scale from zero (no chance) to 100 (complete certainty).

1. A letter from a friend or family member
2. A recipe for cooking a meal
3. A rental contract for leasing an apartment
4. An automobile insurance contract
5. An employment application

6. An instruction manual for operating a computer
7. An employee manual describing job duties and company procedures
8. The questions on a multiple-choice test in a college class
9. An introductory textbook in your major field
10. A graduate level textbook in your major field
11. A scholarly article in a professional journal in your field
12. The daily newspaper
13. An article in Time or Newsweek
14. A short fiction story
15. A 400-page novel
16. A play by Shakespeare
17. A book of poetry
18. A philosophical treatise (Shell et al., 1989)

APPENDIX D

Interest inventory

Name: _____

Period: _____

Interest Survey

For each item, rate your interest from 0 to 100. Each digit may only be used one time. So your most favorite activity would be rated 100 and your second most favorite could only get a rating of 99.

Music

- _____ rock
- _____ pop
- _____ country
- _____ rap
- _____ R & B
- _____ Bluegrass / Jazz

Movies/TV

- _____ Action
- _____ Romance
- _____ Comedy
- _____ True Stories
- _____ Crime
- _____ Sports
- _____ Documentary

Books/Magazines

- _____ Sports Illustrated
- _____ National Geographic
- _____ Business (Forbes etc.)
- _____ News
- _____ Cosmopolitan
- _____ Popular Mechanics
- _____ Tabloids
- _____ Fantasy
- _____ Adventure
- _____ Biography
- _____ Crime
- _____ Historical Fiction
- _____ Non Fiction
- _____ Science Fiction
- _____ Picture Books

Actors/Singers

- _____ Brad Pitt
- _____ Sandra Bullock

- _____ Angelina Jolie
- _____ Kiera Knightley
- _____ Scarlett Johansson
- _____ Nicole Kidman
- _____ Beyoncé
- _____ Bruno Mars
- _____ Pit Bull
- _____ Will Smith
- _____ Snoop Dogg
- _____ Jamie Foxx
- _____ Eddie Murphy
- _____ Chris Brown
- _____ Ice Cube
- _____ Mariah Carey
- _____ Whoopi Goldberg
- _____ Mary J Blige
- _____ Queen Latifah

Sports

- _____ Basketball
- _____ Football
- _____ Soccer
- _____ Volley ball
- _____ Tennis
- _____ Ping pong
- _____ Baseball
- _____ Softball
- _____ Cheerleading
- _____ skateboarding
- _____ Skating
- _____ Track and field

Activities

- _____ Reading
- _____ Writing Stories
- _____ Playing a musical instrument
- _____ Member of a band (rock or school)
- _____ singing
- _____ running
- _____ going to school
- _____ talking on the phone
- _____ playing guitar
- _____ eating

- _____ cooking
- _____ going to movies
- _____ hanging with friends
- _____ shopping
- _____ using the computer
- _____ being on a team
- _____ drawing
- _____ dancing
- _____ listening to music
- _____ skiing
- _____ working

If you could be stuck on an elevator with any person living or dead, who would you be stuck with and why?

If you could be fantastic at doing something, what would it be and why?

Think about the things you have done during the last six months. What were the five things you like doing the most?

1. _____
- _____
2. _____
- _____
3. _____
- _____
4. _____
- _____
5. _____
- _____