

Engaging with Vocabulary:
Understanding the Alignment of Teacher Beliefs and Instructional Practices in Classrooms
Serving Students from Low SES Homes

By

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigates the beliefs about vocabulary instruction of teachers serving students from low socio-economic status (SES) homes, and explores the alignment of teachers' beliefs with their current vocabulary instruction, as well as research-based effective vocabulary instruction. Data was collected from two kindergarten teachers and two first grade teachers. Data collected included two semi-structured interviews, field notes, and video-taped classroom observations. Informed by socio-cultural theory, several themes emerged about teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction. Teachers: (a) view themselves as responsible for students' levels of literacy proficiency including their vocabulary knowledge, (b) recognize that vocabulary instruction adds to their students' overall reading proficiency level, (c) believe there are competing district expectations which keep them from focusing on vocabulary instruction as much as they would like, (d) desire more district input (e.g., professional development, in-service activities) on vocabulary instruction and how to more seamlessly incorporate it into literacy instruction, as well as other subject areas; and (e) have experienced some success in teaching vocabulary in their classroom. Further, teachers desire more ways to increase their student's vocabulary proficiency and they recommend that schools do more to share the research behind vocabulary instruction and how it is incorporated within the current literacy curriculum the district is utilizing. Implications include ways to support vocabulary instruction in the classroom and at the district level, and provides guidance for teachers on how to implement research-based vocabulary practices into existing literacy curriculum.

Keywords: reading instruction, teacher education, elementary education, vocabulary instruction, teacher beliefs, sociocultural theory

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“Education is not just about going to school and getting a degree. It’s about widening your knowledge and absorbing the truth about life.”

~Shakuntala Devi

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Key Terms.....	2
Vocabulary	2
Background	3
Students from Low Socioeconomic Backgrounds	3
Students' from Low SES Backgrounds and Literacy Development.....	4
Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning.....	6
Purpose of the Study	6
Significance of the Study	7
Summary of Chapter 1 and Orientation to Subsequent Chapters	8
Chapter 2.....	10
Review of the Literature.....	10
The Instructional Impact of Teacher Beliefs.....	11
How Children Acquire Vocabulary.....	12
Vocabulary and the Common Core State Standards.....	14
Components of Effective Vocabulary Instruction.....	15
Reading aloud and vocabulary instruction..	16
Rich instruction/explicit instruction vs. incidental instruction/basic instruction.....	17

Selecting words for vocabulary instruction.....	20
Instructional time for vocabulary.	22
Repeated exposure to words.....	22
Dictionary definitions and vocabulary instruction.....	22
Socioeconomic Status	23
SES and educational issues.....	23
SES and family resources.....	23
SES and the school environment.	24
Adult Learners	24
Theoretical Framework.....	25
Summary of Chapter 2	27
Chapter 3.....	28
Overview of Research Design.....	29
Method	31
Research Site.....	31
Participants	33
Karen.....	33
Shayla.....	34
Lindy.....	34
Barb.....	34
Data Collection.....	35

Qualitative Data	35
Teacher interview protocol.....	35
Teacher Lesson Plans	36
Researcher field notes.....	36
Classroom observations.	36
Procedures	37
Stage 1: Preparing for the Study.....	37
Stage 2: Collecting the Data	37
Stage 3: Analyzing the Data	38
Qualitative Data Analysis.....	38
Teacher Interview and Field Notes.....	38
Classroom Observations.....	38
Validity	39
Researcher as Instrument.....	39
Credibility.....	40
Triangulation.....	40
Member checking	40
Summary.....	40
Summary of Chapter 3	41
Chapter 4.....	42
Summary of Qualitative Data Analyzed	42
Data Related to Teachers' Beliefs about Vocabulary Instruction	42

Data Related to Teachers' Beliefs and Instructional Practices.....	43
Profile of Teachers	44
Karen.....	44
Shayla.....	55
Lindy.....	66
Barb.....	77
Summary of Chapter 4.....	87
Chapter 5.....	88
Major Findings.....	89
Implications	99
Suggestions for Future Research.....	100
Limitations of the Study	102
Final Thoughts.....	102
Appendix A.....	116
IRB Approval	116
Appendix B.....	117
Appendix C	119
Appendix D.....	120
Appendix E	123
Appendix F	126

Appendix G.....	130
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List of Tables

Table 1: Timeline of Data Collection	28
Table 2: Teacher Demographic Information	32
Table 3: Deterrents From Teaching Vocabulary	89
Table 4: Themes, Meanings, and Examples from Teacher Data	91

List of Figures

Figure 1: School Site Demographics	30
Figure 2: Reading Proficiency Scores	31
Figure 3. Classroom Observation Scores for Karen	46
Figure 4. Classroom Observation Scores by Vocabulary Practice for Karen	47
Figure 5. Extension Activity Example – Kindergarten.....	51
Figure 6. Classroom Observation Scores for Lindy	57
Figure 7. Classroom Observation Scores by Vocabulary Practice for Lindy	58
Figure 8. Extension Activity Example – First Grade.....	63
Figure 9. Classroom Observation Scores for Shayla	68
Figure 10. Classroom Observation Scores by Vocabulary Practice for Shayla	69
Figure 11. Extension Activity Example – Kindergarten.....	73
Figure 12. Classroom Observation Scores for Barb	78
Figure 13. Extension Activity Example – First Grade.....	83
Figure 14. Classroom Observation Scores by Vocabulary Practice for Barb.....	84
Figure 15. Classroom Observation Scores for All Teachers.....	94
Figure 16. Classroom Observation Scores by Vocabulary Practice for All Teachers.....	96

Chapter 1: Introduction

The importance of students acquiring a rich and varied vocabulary cannot be overstated.

(National Reading Panel, 2000)

Vocabulary knowledge has long been recognized for the important role it plays in the development of reading skills and it has been directly tied to reading success (Biemiller, 2001). This is partly due to that fact that vocabulary is a significant component of reading comprehension (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; National Reading Panel, 2000; Stahl, 1999; Stahl & Nagy, 2006). Students who have larger oral vocabularies than their grade level peers will recognize and understand more of the words they are asked to decode, which in turn allows them to comprehend what they read.

Helping students from low socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds is especially important since research shows that students from low SES homes begin school with considerably fewer words in their vocabulary than that of their peers from more affluent homes (Hart & Risley, 1995). Research suggests students from low SES homes encounter fewer verbal conversations and therefore come to school knowing fewer words. One study found that parent with lower-incomes underestimate their power to influence their children's cognitive development, sometimes by as much as 50 percent (Cuhna, Elo, & Culhane, 2013). Parents with higher incomes tend to spend more time engaging their children in activities that support learning because they have better access to information, and when parents understand the impact they have on their children's cognitive development, they invest more time in such interactions. In other words, the word gap is not about simply access to income, but access to information.

Supporting the vocabulary development for students is crucial given the increased literacy demands placed on all students by the adoption of the Common Core State Standards

(CCSS; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). Given that the academic reading achievement among students from low SES homes has declined or remained stagnant (Reardon, 2013), there is a need to better support teachers so that they can provide more effective vocabulary instruction to young students. Consequently, students from low SES backgrounds need curriculum and teaching centered on instruction of vocabulary (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013). This means that teachers need intensified knowledge and skills to provide rich vocabulary instruction, which in turn increases students' word knowledge (Nagy, 2005). However, to provide professional learning to teachers, there is a need to understand their current beliefs, knowledge, and instructional practices regarding vocabulary. Thus, the present study investigated the beliefs and knowledge about vocabulary instruction of teachers serving students from low SES homes, and explored the alignment of teacher beliefs with the type of vocabulary instruction they currently implement.

To conduct this study, I took a sociocultural stance recognizing that vocabulary learning is multidimensional and even more so when approaching this topic from an instructional perspective.

In the following sections, I define several key terms relevant to this study and introduce the background surrounding the literacy development of low SES students. Lastly, I explain the purpose of this study and its significance.

Key Terms

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is defined as a sum or stock of words employed by a language, group, individual, or field of knowledge (Merriam-Webster, 2003). There are four main types of vocabulary: listening vocabulary, speaking vocabulary, reading vocabulary, and writing vocabulary. The first two constitute spoken vocabulary and the last two, written vocabulary.

Children begin to acquire listening and speaking vocabularies many years before they start to build reading and writing vocabularies. Spoken language forms the basis for written language. Each type of vocabulary has a different purpose and vocabulary development in one area facilitates growth in another area of vocabulary knowledge.

Listening Vocabulary is the words we hear and understand. Starting in the womb, fetuses can detect sounds as early as 16 weeks (Murkoff, 2017). Further, since babies are listening during all their waking hours, they continue to learn new words all day. By the time we reach adulthood, most of us will recognize and understand close to 50,000 words (Stahl, 1999; Tompkins, 2005).

Speaking Vocabulary is the words we use when we talk. Our speaking vocabulary is relatively limited compared with our listening vocabulary. Most adults use a mere 5,000 to 10,000 words for all their conversations (Stahl, 1999). This number is much less than our listening vocabulary most likely due to ease of use.

Reading Vocabulary is the words we understand when we read text. We can read and understand many words that we do not use in our speaking vocabulary. This is our second largest vocabulary once we become readers.

Writing Vocabulary is the words we can retrieve when we write to express ourselves. We generally find it easier to explain ourselves orally, using facial expression and intonation to help get our ideas across, then to find just the right words to communicate the same ideas in writing. Our writing vocabulary is also strongly influenced by the words we can spell (Templeton, 2012).

Background

Students from Low Socioeconomic Backgrounds

Socioeconomic status is broadly defined as one's access to financial, social, cultural, and human capital resources. Traditionally, a student's SES also includes their parents' educational

attainment and occupational status, and household or family income with appropriate adjustment for household or family composition (Chetty, Friedman, Hilger, Saez, Schanzenbach & Yagan, 2011). There is a long history of SES correlation with educational achievement (Cuff, 1934; Holley, 1916; Lynd & Lynd, 1929). The Equality of Educational Opportunity Commission Report (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, & Robert, 1966) played a major role in bringing this correlation to prominence in policy circles. Since then, measures of SES have been routinely included in educational research studies as background variables. Researchers and policy makers are interested in SES as a contextual variable to study educational equity and fairness issues, as a covariate with achievement to examine the effects of other variables such as class size or school governance policies, and as a matching variable to ensure the equivalence of treatment and control groups in educational intervention studies (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008).

Students' from Low SES Backgrounds and Literacy Development

Literacy is important to academic achievement, and several factors influence students' acquisition of reading and writing (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). One factor that can influence literacy development is SES status (Evans, 2004; Hart & Risley, 2003; Jensen, 2009; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Students from low SES backgrounds often have limited home literacy resources and underdeveloped vocabulary knowledge compared to expectations in school (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013; Coyne, Simmons, Kame'enui, 2004; Hart & Risley 1995). For example, most teachers expect students to begin school with foundational language and literacy skills (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). However, some students from low SES homes begin school with limited knowledge of vocabulary, as well as print awareness, alphabetic principles, and phonemic awareness (Higgins, Boone, & Lovitt, 2002). Furthermore, these students are often

exposed to stresses that affect their ability to engage in literacy activities (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). For example, Evans (2004) states that students living in poverty may be exposed to more “family turmoil, violence, separation from their families, instability, and chaotic households” (p. 159) that can hinder literacy development. Another factor that can influence literacy development is a mismatch between home and school expectations (Purcell-Gates, 1996; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). For example, research suggests that while children from low SES home can communicate effectively at home, they often don’t communicate as effectively in school because school talk tends to mirror discourse patterns from middle-class homes (Heath, 1983). Finally, students from low SES backgrounds often have fewer experiences with academic language (Au & Raphael, 2000), which are important for literacy.

Research suggests that students from low SES backgrounds read significantly less at home compared to their peers from middle SES backgrounds (Berliner, 2009; Jensen, 2009; Willingham, 2012). Supporting students’ efforts in becoming avid readers is imperative, as there is evidence that suggests students who read more have larger vocabularies that support reading achievement (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013). To help students from low SES backgrounds become avid readers, teachers can provide explicit decoding and vocabulary instruction that helps students better read and comprehend texts and they can encourage students to read more often and more widely. However, to provide teachers with strategies and guidance that increase student vocabulary achievement, first it is important to understand teachers’ beliefs about vocabulary instruction, as well as if current vocabulary instruction aligns with the recommended instruction for vocabulary achievement.

Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

Beliefs are thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of an individual that influence opinions, the understanding of situations, and the meaning of experiences (Horner & Shwery, 2002; Munhall, 2008). Munhall (2008) states, “a common way of defining belief is “how we see things” (p. 607). She further suggests, “Traditions, history, surrounding, community, etc. together creates a multi-layered outlook on how one interprets reality and experiences things” (Munhall, 2008, p. 608). Teachers’ beliefs, practices and attitudes are important for understanding and improving educational processes. They are closely linked to teachers’ strategies for coping with challenges in their daily professional life and to their general well-being, and they shape students’ learning environment and influence student motivation and achievement (Ananidou & Claro, 2009).

In sum, research suggests that the reading rates among students from low SES backgrounds have either declined or remained stagnant since 1998 (Diaz-Rico, 2012; Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007). Therefore, it is important to learn more about teachers’ beliefs and practices in order to effectively support teachers who instruct students from low SES backgrounds (Terry & Irving, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

Hart and Risley’s (2003) seminal study concluded that children from low SES homes often start kindergarten with significant deficits in vocabulary knowledge compared to their peers from higher SES homes. To facilitate learning, teachers need to have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to provide rich and multifaceted vocabulary instruction to increase students’ word knowledge (Nagy, 2005). However, do teachers have beliefs that support effective

vocabulary instruction? In addition, do their instructional practices align with research-based vocabulary instruction? Thus, the purpose of this study was to understand teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction and explore if their beliefs align with current instructional practices.

Specifically, the present study addressed the following questions:

1. What are teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction?
2. How do teachers' beliefs align with their instructional practices?
3. How do teachers' instructional practices align with research about effective vocabulary instruction?

Understanding teachers' beliefs of vocabulary instruction and their current instructional practices are important. If teachers are engaging in effective practices, teacher educators, as well as novice teachers, can learn from them and, if they are not engaging in effective practices, teacher educators can develop professional development that provides novice and veteran teachers alike with support and guidance that will help them provide more effective vocabulary instruction to students, particularly students from low SES backgrounds.

Significance of the Study

Classroom teachers, both pre-service and in-service, need to have a strong understanding of the causal relationship between vocabulary development and reading achievement. However, research has shown that not all educators are providing students with opportunities for language and vocabulary development. Dickinson and colleagues (Dickinson, Darrow, Ngo, & D'Souz, 2011; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Dickinson, Watson, & Farran, 2008) observed early childhood classrooms to determine the amount of teacher and child talk. Their findings indicate that teachers produced, on average, 80% of all of the talking across various activities, including book reading. Similarly, observations of kindergarten and first-grade classrooms during literacy

instruction found that although an average of 60 minutes was spent engaging children in activities that promote decoding skills, only an average of five minutes of instructional time per day was devoted to engaging children in activities that develop oral language skills (Cunningham, Zibulsky, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2009). In addition, most of the teacher talk was teacher-directed, and offered few open-ended questions that model and promote language development (Dickinson & Porche, 2011; Dickinson & Smith, 1994).

Research has also shown that early childhood teachers spend an average of only five minutes per day explicitly developing oral language and vocabulary skills (Beck & McKeown, 2007; Biemiller, 2001; Cunningham et al., 2009). This leaves little opportunity to engage children in conversations that can promote vocabulary development.

To support teachers, additional research is needed to understand whether current educational trends in vocabulary instruction are being implemented in classrooms. Therefore, the present study is significant because it has implications for policy and practice related to vocabulary instruction, particularly for students from low-income homes. In addition, this study could have implications for teacher preparation programs, and may provide information on the skills and disposition pre-service teachers need to provide effective vocabulary instruction that reaches all students.

Summary of Chapter 1 and Orientation to Subsequent Chapters

In this chapter, I presented the reason for my dissertation study, defined the key terms relevant to this study, provided a background information that underpins the study, and explained the purpose and significance of the study.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the theoretical framework, and review the literature related to vocabulary instruction, vocabulary development, and the literacy achievement of student from

low SES homes. In Chapter 3, I describe the methods I used to address the research questions and I elaborate on the data collected and describe how it was analyzed. In Chapter 4, I present the findings, and in Chapter 5, I identify the major implications, limitations and outline recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Oral language and vocabulary develops through social interactions with family, friends, and other individuals in life. In addition, new vocabulary is learned when associated with interests, such as sports or a subject in school. Increasing vocabulary levels of young students from low-SES backgrounds is especially important as research shows that they tend to begin school with considerably fewer words in their repertoire compared with their peers from middle and high SES backgrounds (Hart & Risley, 1995). Studies have shown that students with greater prior knowledge or background knowledge about specific topics tend to learn more, retain more knowledge, and overall, enjoy learning more than students with limited background knowledge (Marzano, 2004). Students from low SES backgrounds need teachers to use instructional methods that broaden their prior knowledge of various topics, as many of these students begin their school career with fewer experiences. Students with more life experiences may have a wider range of exposure to topic specific words, giving them schematic support when confronted with those words again. Supporting vocabulary development is also important given the increased literacy demands placed on all students, even those in the primary grades, and by the adoption of the CCSS (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). This chapter reviews the literature underlying the research questions which drove the present study:

1. What are teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction?
2. How do teachers' beliefs align with their instructional practices?
3. How do teachers' instructional practices align with research about effective vocabulary instruction?

In order to address the issues that underpin these questions, I present literature related to teacher beliefs and the impact they have on instruction, vocabulary development and instruction, and teacher beliefs about vocabulary instruction.

The Instructional Impact of Teacher Beliefs

Beginning with Rokeach's (1968) seminal work describing the connection between values and beliefs, scholars have built a strong research base regarding the relationship of personal beliefs to professional practice. In recent years, this body of research has been applied to the work of teachers and school leaders to illustrate the role personal beliefs play in maintaining educational practices. Beliefs are deeply personal and are individual truths one holds (Rokeach, 1968). As such, personal beliefs are powerful filters that shape how an individual sees the world, sees other people, and sees oneself. Personal beliefs have a strong effect on professional practice and predict a person's behavior more than personal knowledge. In fact, beliefs can have a stronger influence on behavior than cognitive knowledge (Bandura, 1982; Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1968). Further, beliefs can be incredibly resistant to change (Bandura, 1986). Although beliefs are hard to change, for the current study, it is important to understand teachers' beliefs about vocabulary study because they can also be used to act as a catalyst for change. That is, beliefs influence behavior, so teachers' belief in the value and effectiveness of vocabulary instruction must be considered in order to enact a desired change in their teaching behavior. However, what behaviors do we want teachers to engage in to support students' vocabulary knowledge? In the next section, I describe how children acquire vocabulary and components of effective vocabulary instruction.

How Children Acquire Vocabulary

Children initially develop vocabularies through oral conversations, wherein context clues and background knowledge can help them determine word meanings (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). However, not all children have equal exposure to the same quantity and kinds of oral conversations necessary for early vocabulary development. During Hart and Risley's (1995; 2003) seminal and subsequent longitudinal study on oral vocabulary development, they identified several correlations between what parents said and did with their children in their first three years of life and children's future reading success. They found that, while the quality of talk in households of all socioeconomic status was similar, children from higher SES families heard more talk overall than their peers from lower SES homes, resulting in an almost thirty million-word gap by the time children were three years old. Hart and Risley also identified a strong relationship between children's vocabulary size and their IQ scores, as Marzano (2004) did after them.

In addition to their findings between socioeconomic status and vocabulary, Hart and Risley (1995) found that children with large vocabularies acquired new words at a faster rate. A large vocabulary also helps students learn to read. Further, because students with large oral vocabularies tend to understand the meaning the words they decode, they are more likely to comprehend texts they read (Coyne, Capozzoli-Oldham, & Simmons, 2012; Cromley & Azvedo, 2007; Lesaux & Kieffer, 2010; Stahl & Nagy, 2006). This is not surprising since research shows a connection between vocabulary and reading comprehension, and readers with larger vocabularies are more successful and tend to read independently (Stahl, 1999). On the other hand, when students learn words at a slow rate, they tend to have weaker reading abilities and engage less frequently in independent reading compared with students who learn the meaning of

words more quickly (Biemiller, 2005, 2012; Biemiller & Slonim, 2001). In other words, students with large vocabularies and those who learn words quickly, tend to read well and more often, thus improving their vocabularies and reading skills. Students who have poor vocabulary knowledge and/or learn word meanings slowly tend to have difficulty reading, and read less often, thus missing opportunities to augment their vocabularies and improve their reading skills through practice. The influence of vocabulary knowledge on reading development and comprehension is significant and long lasting (Marzano, 2012).

Beyond oral conversation, vocabulary acquisition occurs in rather predictable ways. For example, children learn new vocabulary because of socialization into various communities of practice. Students also develop vocabulary associated with their interests, which often supports learning academic vocabulary. Academic vocabulary is generally defined as domain-specific academic vocabulary, or the content-specific words used in disciplines like biology, geometry, civics, and geography (Baumann & Graves, 2010). However, if students are not interested in a topic, this can cause challenges to learning academic vocabulary related to that topic (Castek, Dalton, & Grisham, 2012). Explicit descriptions and examples are needed to help students understand and use many of the academic vocabulary terms critical to their success in school (Marzano, 2012).

Vocabulary is related to basic mental processes and skills that affect students' overall academic achievement. Students' ability to name things establishes their ability to form categories (Marzano & Simms, 2013). As students develop more complex categorization systems for new words, they are better able to summarize (Kintsch, 1998; Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978) and make inferences (Anderson & Pearson, 1984) about new information. Knowing more words allows students to think about more concepts in ways that are more complex.

In sum, vocabulary is acquired first through oral conversations and provides a foundation for future vocabulary learning. Students who arrive at school with a large vocabulary are predisposed to learn more words than students do with fewer words in their vocabulary. To support students, teachers need the knowledge and skills to provide rich and multifaceted direct instruction to increase student's vocabulary knowledge (Nagy, 2005). To support teachers, it is important to understand teachers' beliefs and their current instructional practices, and to compare their practices to research based instructional practices that benefit all students.

Vocabulary and the Common Core State Standards. Rigor is important to the CCSS and it is defined as teachers creating an environment in which each student is expected to learn at high levels and providing appropriate feedback and support to students so they demonstrate high levels of learning (Blackburn, 2008). Further, the CCSS expect kindergarten and first grade teachers to help students to (a) ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text (RL.K.4); identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses (RL.1.4); (b) with prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text (RI.K.4); ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases (RI.1.4); (c) determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases (L.K.4; L.1.4); (d) with guidance and support from adults, demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings, with guidance and support (L.K.5; L.1.5); and (e) to use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using frequently occurring conjunctions to signal simple relationships (L.K.6; L.1.6). To do this, teachers should provide effective vocabulary instruction on a consistent basis for all students. In the next section, I address recommendations for effective vocabulary instruction. This is

important for understanding if the vocabulary instruction occurring in classrooms aligns to the components of effective vocabulary instruction. That information should be considered when developing professional learning opportunities for teachers.

Components of Effective Vocabulary Instruction

Effective vocabulary instruction is multidimensional and intentional. It is most effective when addressed on a school-wide basis and then implemented with consistency across grades and within grade level classrooms. A school-wide or district-wide commitment to research-based vocabulary instruction can ensure that there are consistent practices in all classrooms and that there is a cumulative effect on the development of students' vocabulary over the years. The two biggest considerations when planning effective vocabulary instruction are the selection of words to teach and the instructional practices used to help students learn those words (VanDeWeghe, 2007). Before 2000, vocabulary research focused primarily on students in middle and high school, with few studies on student in preschool or the elementary grades. However, since then, the focus of vocabulary research has strongly switched its focus onto primary students and their capacity to learn rich language (e.g., Beck & McKeown, 2007; Collins, 2009; Coyne, McCoach, Loftus, Zipoli, & Kapp, 2009; Silverman, 2007).

Research shows primary grade teachers need to provide direct and explicit vocabulary instruction (Coyne et al., 2004; Puhalla, 2011; Silverman, 2007), and this can be accomplished through read aloud instruction (Beck & McKeown, 2007) and subsequent instructional activities that extend and expand upon the read aloud lesson. Also, instruction should include “rich explanations” of vocabulary definitions in order to increase students' word learning (Collins, 2009), and it should provide increased time to learn new words, as well multiple exposures of

those words (Coyne, McCoach, Loftus, Zipoli, & Kapp, 2009). The following section expands upon what comprises effective vocabulary instruction.

Reading aloud and vocabulary instruction. Baker, Santoro, Chard, Fien and Park (2013) evaluated the read aloud strategies of 12 first grade teachers during a 19 week study to determine whether an intervention of lessons occurring before, during, and after-reading techniques, resulted in an increase in comprehension outcomes among the students in the intervention classrooms. Six of the 12 teacher's classrooms were randomly assigned to the intervention group, while the other six teacher's classrooms were assigned to the comparison (control) group.

The intervention consisted of a read aloud process where books that first-grade teachers commonly read to their students were used for the read aloud. Narrative and expository texts were integrated throughout the intervention so students were exposed to both types of texts. The intervention group teachers were provided a set of prescriptive lessons, where dialogic interactions occurred between teachers and students, as well as among students. Early lessons emphasized teacher demonstrations of comprehension tasks using think-aloud, explicit demonstrations, and concise explanations. As lessons progressed, students assumed greater responsibility for accomplishing comprehension tasks independently with teacher feedback.

Teachers in the comparison group engaged in read aloud activities at least four days per week during the study. Comparison teachers were asked to use read aloud procedures they normally used, particularly procedures they believed would promote student comprehension. Comparison teachers were asked to: select a narrative or expository text that would serve as the focus of the read aloud that day; engage in read aloud activities for approximately 30 minutes

each day; and, at weeks seven and 17 use a book the researchers selected for the read aloud on two consecutive days, which was also being used by the intervention group teachers.

Findings suggest the students in the intervention group outperformed students in the comparison group on measures of narrative retell and vocabulary outcomes (Baker et al., 2013). However, the read aloud intervention did not have a statistically significant effect on measures of student listening comprehension or expository retell.

Rich instruction/explicit instruction vs. incidental instruction/basic instruction. In a follow-up analysis of the above study, Baker and his colleagues (2013) looked at vocabulary outcomes by word type. Intervention effects were statistically significant for words taught only in the intervention classrooms, as well as words exposed in both intervention and comparison classrooms and that were taught explicitly in the intervention classrooms but not necessarily in the comparison classrooms. Intervention effects were not statistically significant for words students were exposed to in both classrooms, but not necessarily taught explicitly in either condition (Baker, et al., 2013). Overall, the intervention had a large impact on vocabulary outcomes, which shows interventions that include explicit vocabulary instruction can have a strong impact on vocabulary outcomes when taught in the context of read aloud lessons.

In a similar study, Maynard, Pullen, and Coyne (2010) analyzed the effectiveness of rich instruction of target words when compared to incidental instruction of target words, as well as basic instruction of target words. Two hundred and twenty-four first-grade students were randomly selected from three elementary schools, and placed into a classroom randomly assigned to one of the three conditions (i.e., rich instruction, basic instruction, and incidental instruction). All three conditions received large group instruction of the storybook intervention in three 20-30 minute sessions over the course of one week.

The rich instruction condition was designed to directly teach the meanings of the target words within the context of the story reading. This instruction also extended children's understanding of target words by providing them with interactive opportunities to process word meanings at a deeper and more refined level and increase students' exposures to the target vocabulary by providing opportunities to interact with and discuss target words in varied contexts beyond those offered in the story. Prior to each reading of the storybook, teachers prompted students to pronounce the target words. Students were encouraged to listen for each of the "magic words" in the story and to raise their hands whenever they heard one. When the target words were encountered in the story, teachers asked students to identify the word and then reread the sentence containing the word. Following this, students were provided with a simple definition of the word. Next, the teacher reread the sentence and replaced the target word with its definition. Finally, students were prompted to pronounce the target word to reinforce its phonological representation. Students were provided with both a simple definition of each target word as well as contextual support for the word's use in the story.

After each reading of the storybook, teachers engaged students in activities that provided them with opportunities to interact with and discuss the target words in rich and varied context beyond those offered in the story. This section of the session began with reintroducing the target word and reviewing how it was used in the story. Students then were engaged in activities that encouraged deep processing and increased exposure to target words in varied and meaningful contexts, including recognizing examples of target words, answering questions about target words, formulating sentences with target words, and responding to sentences containing more than one target word. Teachers asked open-ended questions that encouraged students to extend and elaborate on their initial responses. Open-ended questioning prompted an extended response

that demonstrated a full understanding of target words. Finally, the teacher provided corrective feedback by restating and reinforcing the student response. This approach shares similarities to other definitions of “rich” and “robust” instruction, and provide the basis for the expectation of instructional levels observed during classroom observations during the current study.

In the basic instruction condition, interventionists provided students with simple definitions of target words when they were encountered in the story. Then, the teacher reread the sentence and replaced the target word with its definition. This was the same procedure used to introduce words in the rich condition. However, in the basic condition, students did not receive the post-reading vocabulary activities.

In the comparison group that received incidental instruction, the 12 target words appeared in the story, but were not taught or discussed directly. All participants heard each word three times within the context of the story. Rather than conducting target vocabulary instruction, teachers implemented discussions of the story and asked questions in a dialogic reading format. The students answered the questions using choral response. Student participants responded to the same number of questions that the two treatment groups experienced with target word interactions, thus making the instructional time between the groups equivalent.

The researchers found rich instruction was superior to both basic and incidental exposure to target words in all taught measures (Maynard et al., 2010). These results were maintained at the delayed post-test three weeks following the conclusion of the interventions. The study concludes with a description of a three-step approach to vocabulary instruction: 1) Teachers should read storybooks to students that contain varied and complex vocabulary; 2) Teachers should choose a subset of target words that are contained in the storybook and provide basic instruction of those words; and 3) Teachers should offer rich instruction on a second set of words

from the story. If this approach is used over one school year using six target words per week, teachers can cover 216 words in a school year during 15 minutes per day using rich instruction.

Selecting words for vocabulary instruction. One question many teachers have concerning vocabulary instruction is how to select words to teach during direct instruction. The average high school graduate has a vocabulary comprised of 40,000 words. This means in 12 years of schooling, a child needs to learn around 32,000 words or approximately seven words daily (Sénéchal & Cornell, 1993). It is impossible for teachers to provide instruction on every word that students will encounter; therefore, teachers should be intentionally selective of the words taught to our students through direct instruction. What criteria should be used in selecting words?

Several criteria must be considered to determine which vocabulary words deserve instructional time and attention (Kamil & Hiebert, 2010). First, does the word occur frequently enough that it would be beneficial for a student to know it readily? Second, is the word of high importance and utility? Third, the word needs to have high instructional potential to be found in context, rather than decontextualized, or independent of context. Finally, how frequently will the student have opportunities to encounter this word (opportunities for repetition)? Except in rare occurrences, single exposures of words are unlikely to lead to retention of word meanings (Kamil & Hiebert, 2010).

Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013) provide a framework for selecting words by dividing vocabulary into three tiers. Tier one words are the most basic words that appear in everyday oral conversation that students are exposed to at a high frequency. For example, “happy”, “talk”, and “cold” are all considered tier one words. These words do not require explicit instruction, as most students already understand these words in different contexts.

Tier two words are of high utility, found frequently in a plethora of written texts yet found infrequently in oral conversations, meaning students are not likely to learn them incidentally. These words require the most instruction. For example, the words, “generalize”, “allowable”, and “industrious” would all fall in tier two. The instruction of tier two words is discussed more below.

Tier three words are comprised of rare words that are confined to one topic or concept. These words are best taught when a specific need arises, such as teaching about the word “senate” or “politician” during a unit on the government. Content specific vocabulary, like science and social studies vocabulary would fall under tier three. Therefore, the second tier is where instructional learning of vocabulary should occur. Instruction of words from this tier would contribute significantly to overall vocabulary depth.

Beck and McKeown (2007) conducted two studies with kindergarten and first grade students from schools in which students scored in the low-achieving range in reading on standardized tests. In the first study, the researchers compared the number of words learned by students in an experimental group who received direct instruction with students in a control group who received no instruction. They found that the students in the experimental group learned significantly more words than their control group peers. In the second study, the researchers again compared kindergarten and first grade students’ word learning, this time utilizing two different types and amounts of vocabulary instruction. Students in the control group learned the words through direct instruction over three days, while students in the experimental group learned the same words through direct instruction and engaged in follow-up activities for three additional days. Not surprisingly, the students in the experimental group learned and retained significantly more words than students the control group did.

Instructional time for vocabulary. Instruction should include “rich explanations” of vocabulary, which should involve students engaging in active thinking about word meanings, how they might use the words in different situations, and about the relationships among the words. In order to increase students’ word learning (Beck & McKeown, 2007; Collins, 2009), instruction should also provide an increase of time to learn new words.

Repeated exposure to words. Students should encounter multiple exposures of vocabulary words (Coyne, McCoach, Loftus, Zipoli, & Kapp, 2009). A successful vocabulary program includes exposure to vocabulary in both formal and informal settings so that attention to vocabulary is happening any time and all the time (Beck & McKeown, 2007). Several studies maintain that robust and multifaceted vocabulary instruction is most effective for increasing vocabulary knowledge (Beck & McKeown, 2007; Collins, 2009; Coyne, McCoach, Loftus, Zipoli, & Kapp, 2009).

Dictionary definitions and vocabulary instruction. The National Reading Panel identified vocabulary as one of the five key components of reading instruction that must be present for students to learn to read effectively. The panel reviewed 45 studies on the teaching of vocabulary. Most of the specific instructional practices for teaching vocabulary examined by the panel conferred an advantage in learning to read. Often, these studies compared an enriched form of vocabulary teaching with a more traditional form, such as copying definitions and sentences from the dictionary. The experimental procedures repeatedly led to the best performance, making it easy to conclude that traditional dictionary work is not particularly helpful in increasing student vocabulary. A more effective approach for students to learn word meanings is to create student definitions. Each student identifies what s/he thinks the word means and then the class refines the definition through formal or informal discussion.

Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status (SES) encompasses income, financial security, educational attainment, and subjective beliefs of social status and social class. Further, SES is a consistent and reliable predictor of a vast array of outcomes across the life span, including academic, physical and psychological health (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Thus, SES is relevant to all realms of behavioral and social sciences, including research, practice, education, and advocacy.

SES and educational issues. Research indicates that students from low SES backgrounds and communities develop academic skills at a slower rate compared with peers from middle and high SES backgrounds (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, & Maczuga, 2009). For example, growing up in a low SES home is related to poor cognitive development, language development, memory, socioemotional processing, and consequently can lead to low-income jobs and poor health in adulthood. This can be exacerbated as school in low SES communities because they are often under sourced, which can negatively affect students' academic progress and outcomes (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Inadequate education and increased dropout rates affect students' academic achievement, perpetuating the low-SES status of the community. Improving school systems and early intervention programs may help to reduce some of these risk factors.

SES and family resources. Literacy gaps in children from different socioeconomic backgrounds exist before formal schooling begins and children's initial reading competency is correlated with the home literacy environment (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Bergen, Zuijen, Bishop, & Jong, 2016). Specifically, children from low SES households often have less access to learning materials such as books, computers, stimulating toys, skill-building lessons, and other experiences that create a positive literacy environment (Bradley, Corwyn, McAdoo, & Garcia Coll, 2001) and support early literacy learning.

SES and the school environment. While SES plays an important role in learning, research indicates that teachers and schools can contribute support to students from varying SES backgrounds (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). In one longitudinal study, researchers found that students who were randomly assigned to high quality kindergarten through third grade classrooms were more likely to attend college, save more for retirement, and live in better neighborhoods (Chetty et al., 2011). A teacher's years of experience and quality of training are also correlated with students' academic achievement (Gimbert, Bol, & Wallace, 2007). High quality instruction is defined in part by highly qualified teachers, who are experienced teachers and have participated in meaningful professional development. However, students in low-income schools are less likely to have access to highly qualified teachers (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdo, 2006). The following factors have been found to improve the quality of schools in low-SES neighborhoods: (a) improving teaching and learning, (b) creating of an information-rich environment, (c) building a profession learning community, (d) continuing professional development, (e) involving of parents, and (f) increasing funding and resources (Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, & Russ, 2009). The current study focused on teaching and learning, one aspect of improving schools, by determining what teachers might needed to implement effective vocabulary instruction.

Adult Learners

When providing professional development to teachers, one must recognize that teachers are adult learners and adult learners differ from child learners in many ways (Schlesinger, 2005). First, adults have multiple roles and responsibilities outside their role as a learner that takes a large part of their time and attention. Second, adults have a significant amount of life experiences to bring to the learning situation when compared to child learners. Teacher educators need to recognize the life experience adult learners bring to the classroom and tap into that rich resource.

Third, adults are at a different stage of life than children and because of this difference, adults' motivation and reason for learning differs from children.

Adult motivation to learn is affected by many variables and contexts, and Houle (1961) identified three types of learning orientations. First, goal-oriented learners engage in learning as a means to attaining another goal. This type of learning tends to be extrinsic and economically motivated. Next, activity-oriented learners participate for the opportunity to socialize with other learners and for the sake of a new activity. This might be extrinsically or intrinsically motivated and driven by social or need-based motivation. Finally, learning-oriented learners desire to develop new knowledge for the sake of learning. Likely, these are intrinsically and cognitively motivated. While learners usually have a primary goal, motivation is fluid and can include multiple goals, or changing goals throughout the learning activity. Learning orientation should be considered when developing professional development related to vocabulary instruction.

Theoretical Framework

Social learning perspectives incorporate many different theories, but all share the common belief social interaction is at the core of the development of learning and knowledge. Sociocultural theory, a social learning theory, emphasizes the roles of social, cultural, and historical factors in the human experience. Sociocultural theory differs from other social learning perspectives through its focus on the broader concept of culture, which includes, but is not limited to language.

Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) provided a framework for this study. According to Vygotsky (1978), sociocultural theory of knowledge asserts that members of a particular cultural group develop and share ways of knowing and doing, and in this study, "knowing and doing" vocabulary (Burroughs & Smagorinsky, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, sociocultural

theory suggests that learning occurs through socially mediated interactions, where knowledge is shared socially and then moves to an internal plane.

The major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Vygotsky believed everything is learned on two levels. First, through interaction with others, and then integration into an individual's mental structure.

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57)

A second aspect of Vygotsky's theory is the idea that the potential for cognitive development is limited to a "zone of proximal development" (ZPD). This "zone" is the area of exploration for which the student is cognitively prepared, but requires help and social interaction to fully develop (Briner, 1999). A teacher or more experienced peer is able to provide the learner with "scaffolding" to support the student's evolving understanding of knowledge domains or development of complex skills. Collaborative learning, discourse, modelling, and scaffolding are strategies for supporting the intellectual knowledge and skills of learners and facilitating intentional learning.

This theory was explored further by Bronfenbrenner (1979), who believed interpersonal relationships were embedded in the larger social structures of community, society, economics, and politics. Au (1997) added, "Socio-Cultural research on school literacy learning attempts to

explore the links among historical conditions, current social and institutional contexts, inter-psychological functioning [takes place between people] and intra-psychological functioning [takes place within the individual]” (p. 182).

Summary of Chapter 2

Vocabulary is important to reading success. It has been shown to improve overall reading comprehension, increase decoding skills and willingness to read, and sustain long-term academic achievement. Vocabulary development begins long before a traditional school setting through oral conversations with family and friends. When children participate in frequent and rich conversations, they are more likely to learn words and use this background knowledge to learn more words and content. Research has shown that socioeconomic status influences how many words children learn and that there is a disparity between children from middle-high SES backgrounds and children from SES backgrounds. Unfortunately, this gap seems to remain from that point forward if a conscious effort is not made in the classroom to provide intensive support. Reviews of instructional practices in school indicate that vocabulary instruction has not been a priority in classrooms, but it is gaining traction, as teachers understand the causal relationships between vocabulary and academic success. Research suggests that when teachers implement read aloud strategies, rich instruction, and high-level pre-selected words, students do learn more vocabulary compared with students in classes that use less robust instruction. However, additional research is needed to understand what teachers, who serve student from low SES homes, believe about vocabulary and how they are currently providing vocabulary instruction, in order to provide professional development that helps them to provide effective vocabulary instruction. To that end, I conducted a qualitative study to understand teachers’ beliefs and practices.

Chapter 3

Methodology and Methods

Vocabulary is important for learning and overall academic success. Students from low SES homes tend to have lower vocabulary knowledge compared to students from middle and high SES homes (Wanberg, 2012). Teachers have the potential to support students' vocabulary development, but research shows that students from low SES homes often attend schools with less qualified teachers (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdo, 2006). Thus, the purpose of the current study was to investigate teachers' beliefs of vocabulary instruction and explore if their beliefs align with their practices related to vocabulary instruction. A phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2014) using qualitative methods was used.

A phenomenological approach was selected to guide this study because it permits a researcher to explore the lived experiences of the participants resulting in new knowledge (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2002). The purpose of a phenomenological approach is to (a) discover more about a phenomenon in a natural setting, (b) obtain details from being highly involved in the actual experience, (c) understand and interpret a participant's beliefs on the meaning of an event, and (d) collect data that leads to identifying common themes in participants' beliefs of their experiences (van Manen, 1997). Phenomenology is a well-established methodology in educational research and has been used to examine beliefs and belief systems in various studies (Saevi, 2011; van Manen, 1982; van Manen & Adams, 2010). This study used qualitative data collected including a teacher interview, teacher lesson plans, field notes, and classroom observation records.

Overview of Research Design

This study was conducted in three stages. In Stage 1, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained and permission granted by the school district to conduct research and by the participants. In Stage 2, data was collected. Table 1 presents the timeline of data collected during this 16-week study. In Stage 3, the qualitative data was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach and presented graphically. In the subsequent sections, I describe the research site, research participants, and the methods for collecting and analyzing the data.

Table 1
Timeline of Data Collection

Date Collected	Site/Classroom	Grade Level	Data Collected
November 19-20	MSES (Site 1) Karen (Class 1)	Kindergarten	First Teacher Interviews
	MSES (Site 1) Shayla (Class 2)	1st Grade	
November 28, 30	MSES (Site 1)	Kindergarten	Classroom Observations
December 6, 12, 18	Karen (Class 1)		Field Notes Teacher Lesson Plans
December 4, 11, 17	MSES (Site 1) Shayla (Class 2)	1st Grade	Classroom Observations
January 9, 14			Field Notes Teacher Lesson Plans

November 29	MSES (Site 1)	Kindergarten	Second Teacher Interviews
December 3, 10, 14, 20	Karen (Class 1)		
December 7, 13, 19	MSES (Site 1)	1 st Grade	Second Teacher Interviews
January 11, 15	Shayla (Class 2)		
January 16-17	CSES (Site 2)	Kindergarten	First Teacher Interviews
	Lindy (Class 1)		
	CSES (Site 2)	1st Grade	
	Barb (Class 2)		
January 18, 25, 31	CSES (Site 2)	Kindergarten	Classroom Observations
February 11, 25	Lindy (Class 1)		Field Notes
			Teacher Lesson Plans
January 22	CSES (Site 2)	1st Grade	Classroom Observations
February 1, 12, 18, 27	Barb (Class 2)		Field Notes
			Teacher Lesson Plans
January 24, 29	CSES (Site 2)	Kindergarten	Second Teacher Interviews
February 4, 15, 26	Lindy (Class 1)		
January 28	CSES (Site 2)	1st Grade	Second Teacher Interviews
	Barb (Class 2)		

February 5, 13, 20,
28

Method

Research Site

The present study was conducted at Middle Street Elementary School (MSES; school and participants will be given pseudonyms) and Center Street Elementary School (CSES), both within the City School District (CSD). Both MSES and CSES are located in an urban city in the Midwest region of the United States and serve students from low SES homes, with 84% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch at MSES, while 77% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch at CSES. Students at MSES are classified as 27% European American, 37% Hispanic, 27% African American, and 9% other. In contrast, students at CSES are classified as 44% European American, 21% Hispanic, 22% African American, and 14% other. The demographics for both schools are shown in Figure 1. The schools were selected because they served a high numbers of students from low SES backgrounds (shown in Figure 1), students consistently underperformed on reading assessments (shown in Figure 2), and school and teachers' willingness to participate in the study.

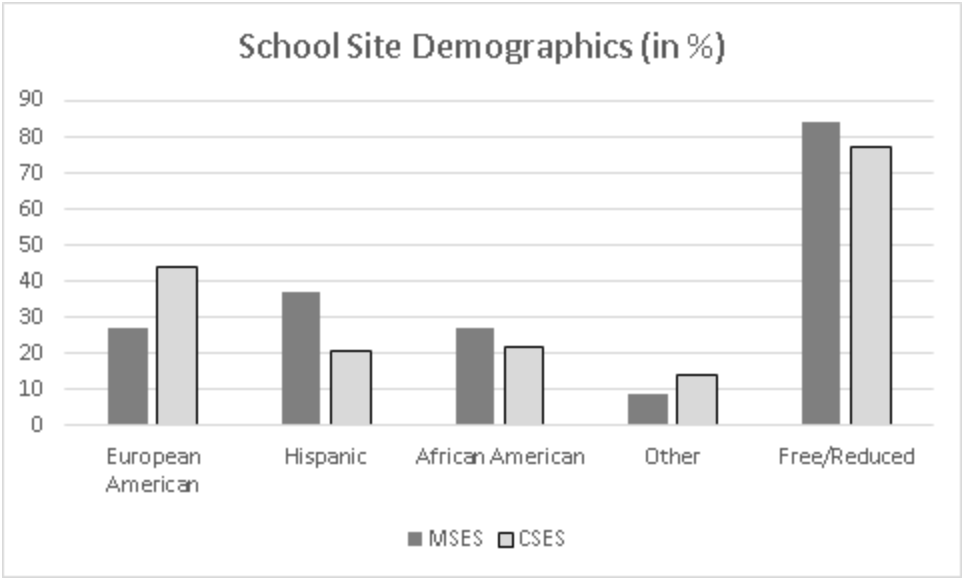


Figure 1. School Site Demographics. This figure represents the demographics of students attending both respective school sites.

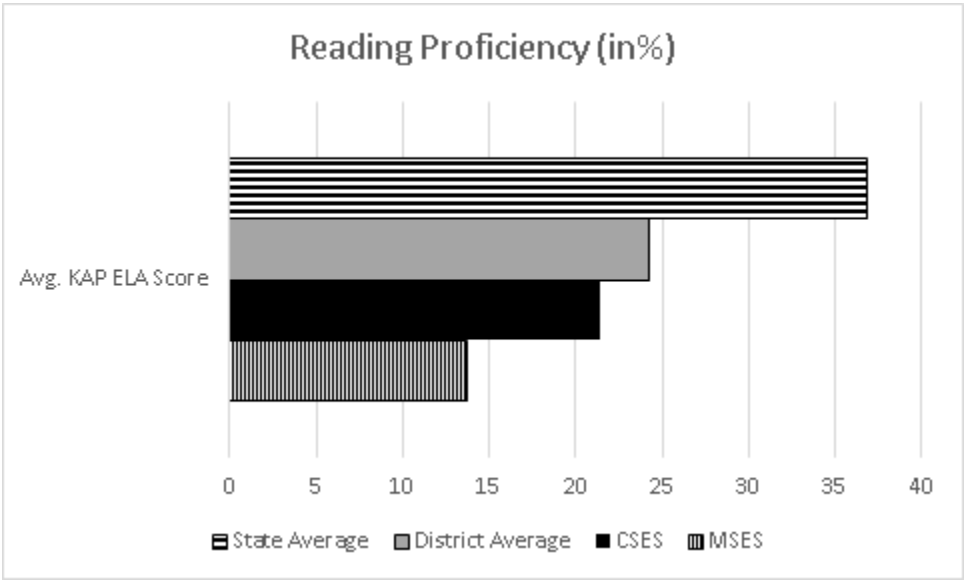


Figure 2. Reading Proficiency Scores (in %). This figure represents the average Kansas Assessment Program (KAP) English Language Arts (ELA) scores for both school sites as well as the state and district average scores.

Participants

Upon approval of the district's director of curriculum and instruction, I contacted each building's administrator for approval, and to serve as a point of contact for this study. Upon receiving the criteria for the study, building administrators identified two to three teachers per grade level at each school they believed met the criteria for the study: (a) a kindergarten or first grade teacher in a general education classroom, (b) teaches vocabulary as a part of the district wide curriculum, and (c) willing to participate in the study. Teachers were recruited and four were selected for the study. The teachers' demographic information is presented in Table 2. A more detailed description of each teacher follows.

Table 2

Teacher Demographic Information

Teacher	Years of Experience	Current Grade Level	Years at Current Grade Level	School Site	Years at School Site	Highest Degree
Karen	2	Kindergarten	2	MSES	1	BS
Lindy	6	Kindergarten	3	CSES	6	BS
Shayla	6	1 st Grade	3	MSES	3	BS
Barb	10	1 st Grade	10	CSES	10	MS-Rdg

Karen

Karen is a Caucasian 26 years old female in her second year as a kindergarten teacher. It was her first year at Middle State Elementary School (MSES), as the previous year she taught at a different school in a different city. She has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and is licensed to teach kindergarten through sixth grade.

Shayla

Shayla is a 31 years old Caucasian female. She has taught first grade for three years and taught second grade for three years prior to moving to first grade. She has taught as a classroom teacher for a total of six years. She has been at her school, MSES, for three years. She has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and is licensed to teach kindergarten through sixth grade.

Lindy

Lindy is a Hispanic 34 years old female. She taught kindergarten for three years, and first grade three years prior to moving to kindergarten, for a total of six years of teaching experience. She taught all six years at Central State Elementary School (CSES). She has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and is licensed to teach kindergarten through sixth grade. She also holds a license for teaching English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Barb

Barb is a 37 years old African American female. She taught first grade for all 10 years of her teaching experience and has only taught at CSES. She has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and is licensed to teach kindergarten through sixth grade. She also has a Master's degree in reading and is a licensed reading specialist for grades pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Data Collection

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data included (a) transcripts of two semi-structured interviews with teachers, (b) researcher field notes, (c) teacher lesson plans, and (d) classroom observation records. The first interview was a semi-structured conversation between researcher and participants to gather demographic information and learn about teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction. The questions focused strongly on teacher beliefs, and was used to address research question 1, "What are teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction?" The second interview followed researcher observations of instructional time, and allowed more in-depth information to be collected from the teacher, as well as more details about instructional practices and beliefs that were not addressed in the first interview. The observational field notes were used to observe current instructional practices in each classroom, and address research question 3, "How do teachers' instructional practices align with research about effective vocabulary instruction?" Data was organized using QSR International's NVivo 12 qualitative analysis software.

Teacher interview protocol. Teachers were interviewed at the beginning and end of the study using an adapted interview protocol called "Inside the Classroom Interview Protocol" (Weiss, et al., 2003). See Appendix A and B for more information. Teachers were interviewed individually and interviews took place in a quiet setting in the school. In the rare occurrence of scheduling issues, interviews were conducted over the phone. The first interview consisted of 10 semi-structured interview questions about each teacher's (a) learning goals, (b) content/topic, (c) resources used to design the lesson, (d) demographic information about each teacher, and (e) beliefs about instruction and vocabulary. To understand teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction, it was important to interview teachers after they have had a chance to fully immerse in classroom curriculum. City School District implemented a new reading curriculum in the fall

of 2018 which required additional time for teacher familiarity. Thus, the first teacher interviews were conducted in November. The interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed within two days of the interview. Demographic information was also collected during the interview.

The second interview was conducted after I observed class instruction, and which allowed me to collect more in-depth information from the teacher, as well as more details about the instructional practices and beliefs that were not addressed during the first interview.

Teacher Lesson Plans. Teacher lesson plans were collected for each lesson observed, resulting in 20 lesson plans overall. Lesson plans were used to record additional data on the lessons observed, such as if the teacher changed any content or made any modifications for differentiated learning from what was recommended in the curriculum.

Researcher field notes. Anecdotal field notes were taken during classroom observations. I recorded descriptive information about the setting, actions, behaviors, and teacher-student conversations I observed. I also recorded reflective information about my thoughts, ideas, questions, and concerns as I conducted my observation. Anecdotal field notes were also taken during each interview as a precaution in the event of a technological malfunction,

Classroom observations. The *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool (Appendix D) was used to focus classroom observations and help teachers embed vocabulary strategies into informal and formal classroom instruction. The observation tool comes from ‘Doing What Works’ (DWW), a project developed by the Innovation Studies Program at WestEd in partnership with American Institutes for Research and RMC Research Corporation. It was funded, in part, through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences (WestEd, 2018).

The Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction tool is a theoretically sound instrument for identifying a teacher's experience and expertise in developing their students' word knowledge. This tool is built upon many of the research-based strategies and theories of vocabulary development presented in Chapter 2 including explicit vocabulary strategies embedded throughout content lessons, such as oral conversations, socialization, context clues, background knowledge and explicit descriptions and examples.

I video recorded the classrooms while I observed to assist in qualifying the observations throughout data analysis. During the observations, copies of class activities or assignments students completed served as artifacts for further data collection.

Procedures

Stage 1: Preparing for the Study

In October 2018, I obtained written permission and access to the site by both the district superintendent and the school principal. Upon the University of Kansas Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I sent recruitment letters to the teachers whom the building principals believed met the criteria previously described. I sought to recruit four teachers for the study with the understanding their participation is completely voluntary.

Stage 2: Collecting the Data

In November, I conducted the first digitally recorded interviews with the teachers. During the first interview I introduced the study and collected the teachers' beliefs surrounding vocabulary instruction. I observed in each classroom five times over the course of the semester for an hour each session and video-recorded instruction so I could more accurately quantify instruction during phase two. I observed during the block of time teachers reported they do the

most vocabulary instruction, which included the literacy block, science block, social studies block, or another designated time.

Stage 3: Analyzing the Data

Qualitative Data Analysis.

Teacher Interview and Field Notes. Qualitative data analysis followed a thematic analysis design (Boyatzis, 1998) and proceeded in three phases. During Phase One, data was transcribed verbatim and transcripts were read multiple times as I took notes in the margins. Multiple readings assisted in becoming familiar with the responses and identification of patterns and themes. That is, I identified commonalities and differences in teachers' responses regarding beliefs about vocabulary instruction and current classroom practices for teaching vocabulary. I then separated the responses into parts or units (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and extracted the repetitive significant statements.

During Phase Two, tentative themes, ideas, and patterns from the data were coded. Finally, in Phase Three, I generated category and subcategory heading titles, noting similarities and differences across teachers with the use of QSR International's NVivo 12 software.

Classroom Observations. During Phase One, I took notes on the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool (Appendix D) to indicate what strategies/activities, etc. were used (if any) for each criterion listed.

As stated above, during Phase Two, tentative themes, ideas, and patterns from the data were coded. Finally, in Phase Three, I generated category and subcategory heading titles, noting similarities and differences across teachers with the use of the NVivo software.

The *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool (Appendix D) uses a credit/no credit scale to indicate if teachers are observed utilizing each criterion. Scores of one

indicate the given criterion was observed, while scores of zero indicate the criterion was not observed. To measure the research-based vocabulary instruction occurring in these classrooms, I compiled the observed data in a spreadsheet and used the same credit/no credit scale to indicate if teachers were observed utilizing each criterion. Scores of one indicate the given criterion was observed, while scores of zero indicate the criterion was not observed.

Validity

As with all research studies, I recognize that threats to descriptive, interpretive, and internal validity may exist and warrant comment (Burgess, Bengue, Onwuegbuzie, & Mallette, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). These are identified and addressed in subsequent sections.

Researcher as Instrument.

As with all qualitative studies, the data analysis process is inevitably influenced to a degree by a researcher's background and theoretical perspectives. I took several steps to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. First, I acknowledged my role as a researcher. Since I am Caucasian raised in a middle-class home, and was a classroom teacher for seven years, it is imperative I anticipated and addressed several biases such as: How does my background help and/or hinder my relationships with my participants? Whose understandings do I use in my research? How does who I am affect my study? To answer these questions, I wrote an autobiographical account or narrative beginning before the study (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). This narrative process took place prior to data collection and was based on my perspective as a former teacher and Caucasian female from a middle-class background. These characteristics, some of which may mirror those of the participants in this study, provided a lens into the cultural aspects of the student to add a level of "quality" to qualitative research (Mertens, 1998). Throughout the study, I wrote accounts of individual experiences to retain sensitivity and not essentialize the participant's experiences. These accounts helped support my effort to remain

objective during all interviews and analysis. I positioned myself as a learner in relation to the participants in this study by assuming that the teachers are more knowledgeable about their lives and experiences than I am. This allowed me to view the data from their eyes (Johnson & Crowles, 2009). I consulted with my academic advisor and doctoral peers, and conducted member checks by receiving feedback from my participants and making their suggested changes; however, I acknowledge that my interpretation may still differ from how others might interpret the data.

Credibility

Triangulation. As in all studies, there is a possibility of some error in the accuracy of the account. To account for this, I triangulated the data with the use of three or more measures (e.g. field notes, teacher interviews, and classroom observations) in order to increase the likelihood that the study will be understood from a variety of perspectives. Methods of triangulation include comparing and integrating findings of the multiple sources employed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Member checking. In an effort to accurately portray the meanings given by the participants, I employed two member-checking strategies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). First, during the interviews, I restated the participants' responses. By stating my understanding of interpretation with participants, they had the opportunity to correct any potential misunderstandings or bias. Secondly, I shared summaries of each teacher's interview with him/her in order for teachers to check the accuracy of the interview, as well as my interpretation.

Summary

In sum, a thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the qualitative data. First, as in typical thematic analysis protocol, I used a systematic and verifiable process of reducing the data to the essential information. Second, nonessential words were eliminated while coding each

comment or response. Third, after all comments were entered into the NVivo 12 software, common categories and themes emerged. Finally, I generated category and subcategory heading titles, noting similarities and differences across the teacher responses.

I ensured trustworthiness and credibility through member checking and triangulation of data. I took every measure to ensure this study is generalizable across kindergarten and first grade classrooms.

Summary of Chapter 3

The aim of this 16-week qualitative study was to more deeply understand teacher beliefs as they relate to vocabulary instruction, particularly for students from low SES backgrounds. In this chapter, I provided an overview of the methods, described the participants, presented the data collection process, and the three phases of the thematic analysis approach that were used for this study. In the next chapter I describe how I analyzed my data and provide findings.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this 16-week qualitative study was to understand teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction and how, if at all, teacher's beliefs align with their vocabulary instruction, particularly for teachers of students from low SES backgrounds. Multiple sources of data were collected to answer the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction?
2. How do teachers' beliefs align with their instructional practices?
3. How do teachers' instructional practices align with research about effective vocabulary instruction?

In this chapter, I first summarize the qualitative data collected (teacher interviews 1 & 2, classroom observation notes, field notes, and teacher lesson plans) and then I present results for each teacher.

Summary of Qualitative Data Analyzed

Data Related to Teachers' Beliefs about Vocabulary Instruction

In order to answer research question 1, "What are teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction?" and capture teacher beliefs toward vocabulary instruction, each teacher completed two semi-structured interviews, submitted five lesson plans that included vocabulary activities, and were observed teaching multiple lessons incorporating vocabulary weekly for a total of five hours over one instructional unit, which was captured using video recordings and researcher field notes were taken simultaneously while observing vocabulary instruction. In all, I observed 20 hours of instructional time among the four teachers and four instructional units, two units focusing on fictional stories, and two units focusing on nonfiction stories. I also reviewed lesson plans for 20 weeks of instruction.

Data Related to Teachers' Beliefs and Instructional Practices

For research question 2, “How do teachers’ beliefs align with their instructional practices?” I utilized the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool (Appendix D) to determine if and how often teachers were using self-reported beliefs/practices when providing high-quality vocabulary instruction. The *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool uses a credit/no credit system to indicate whether or not a particular criterion is observed. A score of one indicated the instructional practice was observed, while a score of zero indicated the instructional practice was not observed. I matched the total times out of five observations I observed the teacher-indicated beliefs/practices about vocabulary instruction to the following scale: observation scores of three to five were interpreted to mean the teacher utilized the reported belief/practice ‘a lot’ in their vocabulary instruction, observation scores of two were interpreted to mean the teacher utilized the reported belief/practice a little in their vocabulary instruction, and one or zero were interpreted to mean the teacher utilized the reported belief/practice rarely, if at all.

Finally, to answer research question 3, “How do teachers’ instructional practices align with research about effective vocabulary instruction?” and measure vocabulary instruction occurring in these classrooms, I again utilized the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool to observe how often the attributes of effective research-based vocabulary instruction, presented in Chapter 2, were implemented, specifically: read-aloud, rich/explicit instruction, pre-selected words, instructional time, repeated exposure, and student created meanings.

I matched the total times I observed the previously mentioned effective vocabulary instructional practices to the following scale: observation scores of three or higher were

interpreted to mean the teacher utilized the effective vocabulary instructional practice ‘a lot’ in their instruction, observation scores of two were interpreted to mean the teacher utilized the effective vocabulary instructional practice a little in their instruction, and one or less were interpreted to mean the teacher utilized the effective vocabulary instructional practice rarely, if at all.

Next, I give a detailed profile of each teacher.

Profile of Teachers

Karen

Karen has been a classroom teacher for two years, with the current school year being her first year at Middle State Elementary School (MSES). She has taught kindergarten for two years. MSES serves 615 students in grades prekindergarten through fifth grade, with 84% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunches and school fees. Students at MSES are classified as 27% European American, 37% Hispanic, 27% African American, and 9% other. Karen currently teaches a class of 18 kindergarteners, 12 boys and six girls. Karen has one student that is an English language learner (ELL) and receives English as a second language (ESOL) services outside the classroom.

Karen’s classroom has a rustic decor and a warm atmosphere. For example, one of the first things I noticed was the relaxing music she was playing and the eucalyptus and spearmint air freshener that had a very refreshing and calming smell. She has student work displayed in the hallway along with a description of what state standard the work covers. The first time I observed in her classroom, the class had used water color paints to decorate rainbows that showed off addition fact families for the number 10. The door to the classroom has a poster on it that lists all of the classroom roles students take on once they enter, such as investigator, mathematician, scientist, etc. When I entered the classroom, I saw six hexagon tables set up with

child sized chairs at each one, grouped by color. Each student has their own name tag at their assigned seat, and community supplies are available on the shelf towards the back of the room. Aside from student tables, there is a teacher area with a large desk, and carts on wheels with teacher supplies next to the desk. There is also a classroom sink behind the teacher area and a large section of built in cabinets. In the front of the classroom is a carpeted area with a rocking chair which is used for read aloud activities, morning community, and whole group activities. Each student in the class is assigned an iPad for school use, which is used during reading and math centers for enrichment activities. There are many literacy resources on the walls of the classroom, including a word wall, letter cards for each letter of the alphabet along with consonant digraphs that accompany the school phonics curriculum, a phonetic alphabet poster and a bean bag at the back of the room for students to visit if they need a brain break or are having a moment of sadness.

When asked what she values most about literacy, Karen shared the following story about how she came to love literacy during the first interview on November 19, 2018.

I took literacy for granted until I started teaching. I forgot how hard it is to learn how to read and write and understand things that you are reading and writing. As an adult it doesn't cross my mind at any point during the day that someone had to be patient enough to teach me all of these things so I value the teachers who taught me to love literacy. I also value the fact that literacy can be so broad and can take you places you never thought it could. You can learn about any subject through literacy.

Karen believes students learn literacy best through teachers and adults modeling of literacy practices, as well as hearing fluent, accurate reading through teacher reading aloud. This was evident during the time I observed in Karen's classroom. I had the opportunity to watch her

read aloud and model five separate texts for her students. I also observed several shelves of books available for students arranged by topic, as well as signs for several literacy centers including buddy reading where students could read as partners copies of books the class had previously read altogether, a poetry center where students attempted to recreate and read a poem written on sentence strips, and a word wall resided on a large white board in the middle of the wall where all students could utilize it for their writing center. There were also sentence strips with questions written on them for students to answer in their writing journals. Based on the literacy tools on the walls and shelves of the classroom and the literacy centers available, literacy was an obvious focus in Karen's classroom.

Karen shared that the most effective practices in her classroom when teaching vocabulary are a) repetition of words, b) informal and formal assessments, and c) connecting new words to known words and examples. Using the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool (Appendix D), I was able to observe some of these practices during vocabulary instruction. Karen started each lesson with providing students with the new word(s) that they would be learning (five out of five lessons observed) and provided explicit instruction by introducing the word and its meaning prior to reading it in context (four out of five lessons observed). She then read aloud to her students (five out of five times observed), and provided informal assessments to assess student understanding (four out of five times observed). She asked students to share an example they thought of when they heard the definition of the new word(s) she was introducing (three out of five times observed). However, while Karen stated that repetition of words was an effective way her students learned vocabulary, I did not observe that occurring in her classroom (zero out of five times observed). When asked why she didn't repeat new words more often throughout her lessons, she said she was running short on time (their

reading block was directly before recess) and she had to make choices of what was the most important part to cover during the lesson. Figure 3 presents Karen’s observed vocabulary instructional score on the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool based on her self-reported best practices for teaching vocabulary. Overall, based on the observation data, Karen assesses student learning, uses scaffold strategies, provides practice opportunities, and implements explicit instruction. However, there was little evidence that she provides instruction on pre-selected words, meaning Karen was not observed explicitly teaching students vocabulary words from context.

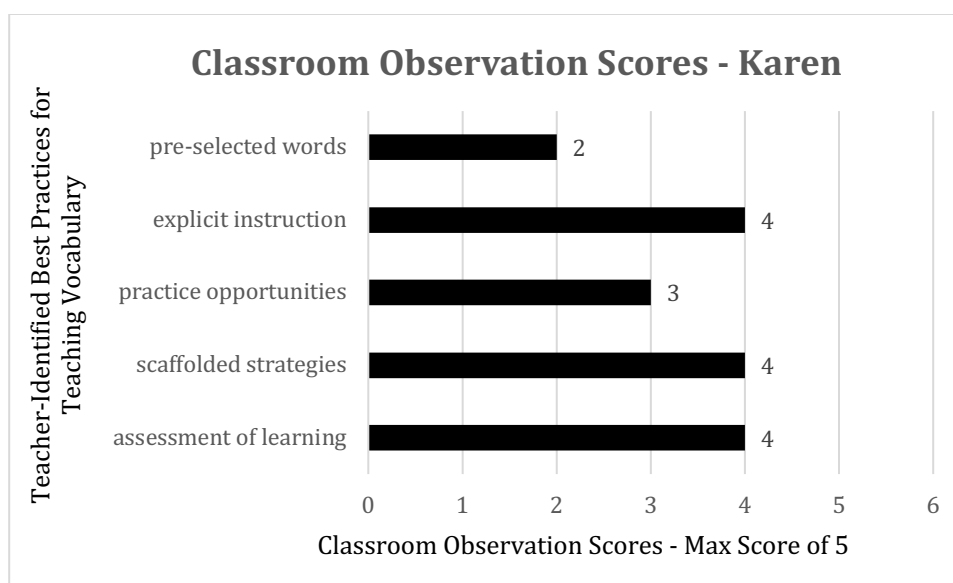


Figure 3. Classroom Observation Scores for Karen.

When asked about district expectations, Karen described the district views and expectations of vocabulary instruction as “pushed to the back” behind the district’s high focus on math instruction. She further explained, “The school and district have not set high expectations for vocabulary or literacy as a whole. As a grade level we decided to test vocabulary on our texts to check for student understanding.” When asked if there were any tensions between what she

believed were the best practices for literacy instruction and what the district mandated, she said no, that she follows the districts guidelines and expectations, but is frustrated student understanding of the vocabulary is on the district report card for kindergarten yet not a focus for the district. She went on to say that regardless of the district position on vocabulary, she thinks it is essential that students know certain words and terms by the end of the year.

Figure 4 presents Karen's observed vocabulary instructional score on the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool by effective vocabulary instructional practice (identified in Chapter 2).

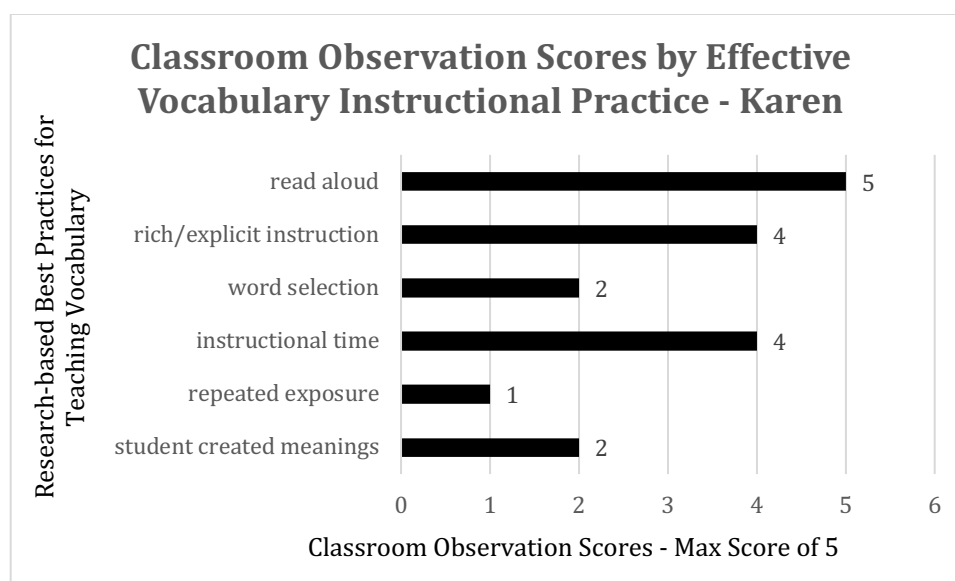


Figure 4. Classroom Observation Scores by Effective Vocabulary Instructional Practice for Karen.

Because teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction can influence their instructional practices toward vocabulary instruction, I reviewed the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool scores an additional time through the

lens of the previously identified best practices for teaching vocabulary instruction. I observed Karen reading aloud to her students during all five of the observation times. She provided rich and explicit instruction on vocabulary strategies throughout four of the five lessons observed, and instruction was focused on vocabulary instructional strategies and skills during four of the five lessons observed.

For example, Karen read aloud the informational text *What Will the Weather Be?* (DeWitt & Croll, 2015). She started the lesson by gathering all of the students on the carpet at the front of her room and gave a copy of the book to each student. She asked the students read their books and look at the pages while they sat on the carpet. She introduced the lesson focus, which was “use words to understand a text.” Karen set the purpose of the lesson through the exchange below from December 18, 2018:

Karen: We can gain information about the weather from observations we make and share and from questions we ask and answer about unknown words. (*Karen shows the front cover of the story to the students.*) Today we are going to keep reading *What Will the Weather Be?* by Lynda DeWitt and Illustrated by Carolyn Croll. Do you think *What Will the Weather Be?* Is a good title for this book?

Student one: Yes!

Karen: Why do you think it is a good title?

Student one: Because it asks ‘What will the weather be?’ so we can answer that question.

Karen: You are right you can answer that question, but how can we answer that?

Student two: Through reading the story!

Karen: Correct! Through reading the book we can help to answer that question. We are going to learn how to ask and answer questions to help us figure out the meanings of words in a text. I'm going to read aloud this text. Your job is to listen carefully for new words that you don't know.

Karen started to read the story and stopped after a few pages to ask the students questions about what they had read.

Karen: What does the book tell us the weather looks like when the air pressure is high?

Student one: Nice.

Student two: Sunny.

Student three: Not raining and nice outside.

Karen: How do you know it is nice outside?

Student two: Because the book said the weather is sunny when the air pressure is high and I remembered that.

Karen: Exactly! As we read stories, we can find words that we don't know.

Sometimes we need to look closer at a new word to understand what it means, either in the story or see if the pictures help us understand.

Karen: Let's look at page 22 in our book. (*Karen holds up her book so the students can see what page she is looking at along with her verbal directions*). How does the illustration on page 22 help us to understand how air pressure works?

(No response from students)

Karen: Can we look at the illustration's arrows to see how air pushes in and out of the girl's body?

Students: Yes.

Karen: That's an illustration of air pressure. The air pushes out from the inside of the girl's body and pushes in from the outside.

Karen: So, if we think about what we just talked about with air pressure, what happens to a basketball when it has no air inside?

Student four: It is flat.

Karen: Right. It collapses, right? Collapses is one of those words that the author helps us to understand. (Student four) just told us the ball is flat if it has no air. So, using that definition is there another word that we could use in place of collapses?

Student five: Falls?

Karen: Yes! So, thinking about the words flat, collapses, falls, what do you predict would happen when you let the air out of a balloon?

Student six: It will collapse.

Karen: Exactly, it will collapse because of the air pressure on the outside pushing in on it. It stays inflated when the air pressure is equal on both sides, but when the balloon is letting out air, the air pressure on the outside becomes stronger.

Karen: Our two new words we are focusing on today are collapses and force, both found on pages 22 and 23. You are going to pick one of these words to illustrate on page 158 of your Reader's and Writer's Journal (see Figure 5). Remember illustrate means to draw a picture of something, so you are going to draw a picture of either force or collapses in your journal.

DIRECTIONS Choose a word from below and draw it in the box.

force collapses



Figure 5. Workbook page 157 from *ReadyGen* Kindergarten Literacy Program (Pearson, 2019).

Time was spent on vocabulary instruction during four of the five observed lessons. I considered instructional time spent on vocabulary instruction to be when instruction was focused solely on vocabulary, either directly or indirectly. Pre-selected words were highlighted during the observed lessons two of the five observed times, meaning Karen would explicitly state and show students the selected words from the text, including words which may have been previously discussed in prior lessons. I counted this as not being observed if the words selected were not explicitly stated or spoken about outside of the context of the story read aloud. Upon a closer look of the teacher's manual, there is no reference to words taught by Karen in previous lessons, so if a teacher was to focus solely on what was being asked to teach in the teacher's manual, previous words would not be included in the lesson content. Repeated exposure to the introduced words through extension activities or independent practice was observed during one out of five of the lessons. The extension activity provided through the curriculum consisted of one workbook page per lesson where students were asked to illustrate one of the new words, which does not meet the definition of repeated exposure as defined in Chapter 2 as "[words] encountered often and in various contexts" (Coyne, McCoach, Loftus, Zipoli, & Kapp, 2009). Overall, based on the observation data, Karen's reads aloud provides rich/explicit instruction, and she focuses on vocabulary during her instruction. She also provides instruction on pre-selected words and allows time for students to create meanings by providing word definitions a little, while students are rarely, if at all, provided with repeated exposure to vocabulary words.

In sum, Karen has a positive attitude toward vocabulary instruction and thinks literacy is important and needed to be successful in life. Karen believes students learn

literacy best through teachers and adults modeling of literacy practices, as well as hearing fluent, accurate reading through teachers reading aloud. Karen shared that the most effective practices in her classroom when teaching vocabulary are a) repetition of words, b) informal and formal assessments, and c) connecting new words to known words and examples.

Using the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool (Appendix D), I observed Karen reading aloud to her students during all five of the observation times. She provided rich and explicit instruction on vocabulary strategies throughout four of the five lessons observed, and instruction was focused on vocabulary instructional strategies and skills during four of the five lessons observed. However, while Karen stated that repetition of words was an effective way her students learned vocabulary, I did not observe that occurring in her classroom (zero out of five times observed). Overall, based on the observation data, Karen assesses students' learning, scaffolds strategies, provides practice opportunities, and implements explicit instruction. However, there was little evidence she provides pre-selected words during the vocabulary instruction.

When I viewed my observations of Karen through an effective vocabulary instruction lens based on the research provided in Chapter 2, I observed Karen reading aloud to her students during all five of the observation times. She provided rich and explicit instruction on vocabulary strategies throughout four of the five lessons observed, and instruction was focused on vocabulary instructional strategies and skills during four of the five lessons observed.

Overall, based on the observation data, Karen reads aloud to her students daily, provides rich/explicit instruction, and focuses on vocabulary during instructional time in

her classroom. She also provides instruction on pre-selected vocabulary words and allows time for student created meanings via providing word definitions a little, however, students are rarely, if at all, provided with repeated exposure to vocabulary words.

Shayla

Shayla has been a classroom teacher for six years, the current school year being her third year at Middle State Elementary School (MSES). She has taught first grade for three years and taught second grade for three years prior to moving to first grade. MSES serves 615 students in grades prekindergarten through fifth grade, with 84% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunches and school fees. Students at MSES are classified as 27% European American, 37% Hispanic, 27% African American, and 9% other. Shayla currently teaches a class of 16 first graders, 10 boys and six girls.

Shayla's classroom has a colorful and inviting atmosphere. For example, one of the first things I noticed was the bright colors of her classroom décor and the way everything hung up or displayed had a specific purpose, from the word wall to the anchor charts. This year she decorated her classroom with the theme of a crayon box and has student name plates, posters, and lettering all attributed to that theme. On the door as you enter is an oversized crayon box with student names written on each of the crayons. Above the crayon box it states, "We are like a box of crayons. Each one of us is unique. And when we get together, our classroom is complete." When I entered the classroom, I saw student desks arranged in groups of four with child sized chairs at each one. Each student has their own name tag at their assigned desk, and the student desks are arranged so the students face a student directly across from them, as well as a student sitting directly beside them. Shayla reported that the students are ability grouped with one

student each that is considered “high”, “mid-high”, “mid-low”, and “low” at each group. Aside from the student desks, there is a teacher area with a large desk, and carts on wheels with teacher supplies next to the desk. In the front of the classroom there is a teacher stool with Shayla’s name on it, which is used for read aloud activities, morning community, and also serves as an author’s chair where students can read aloud their writing creations. Each student in the class is assigned a Chromebook for school use, which is used multiple times during reading and math blocks for enrichment activities. There are many literacy resources on the walls of the classroom, including a word wall, letter cards for each letter of the alphabet along with consonant digraphs that accompany the school phonics curriculum, a phonetic alphabet poster and a bean bag at the back of the room for students to visit if they need a brain break or are having a moment of sadness.

When asked her beliefs about how students learn literacy best, Shayla shared the following during her first interview on November 21, 2018.

I believe students learn literacy best by being in a literacy rich environment that values learning. I think materials need to be available and appropriate for each child at their level. I believe that students need to be exposed to books, writing, and vocabulary. They also need to be explicitly taught skills like phonological awareness, decoding, writing, and comprehension. Lessons should be a combination of whole group, small groups with targeted skills, and even one-on-one with students.

I had the opportunity to observe several of these key beliefs while in Shayla’s classroom. I observed her read aloud and model two different texts on five separate occasions for her students. Further, I noticed several shelves of books available for students arranged by theme, as well as signs for several literacy centers including word workshop center where students could

build sight words and spelling words using magnetic letter tiles, a poetry center where students read a poem written on sentence strips, and a word wall students could utilize for their writing center as well as for writing in their journals.

Shayla shared that the most effective practices in her classroom when teaching vocabulary are a) exposure to unknown words through read alouds, b) informal and formal assessments, and c) repetition of words. Using the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool (Appendix D), I was able to observe some of these practices during vocabulary instruction. Shayla started each lesson with providing students with the new word(s) that they would be learning (five out of five lessons observed) and provided explicit instruction by introducing the word and its meaning prior to reading it in context (four out of five lessons observed). She then read aloud to her students (five out of five times observed), and provided informal assessments to assess student understanding through whole group questioning (two out of five times observed). She asked students to share an example they thought of when they heard the definition of the new word(s) she was introducing (three out of five times observed). Shayla provided opportunities for repeated exposure of words through extension activities (three out of five times observed). Figure 6 present Shayla's observed vocabulary instructional score on the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool. Overall, based on the observation data, Shayla provided instruction on how to select words from read alouds for students to think deeper about, showed students scaffolded strategies for vocabulary, provided practice opportunities for students independently, and gave explicit instruction on vocabulary a lot, while she provided assessment of learning a little.

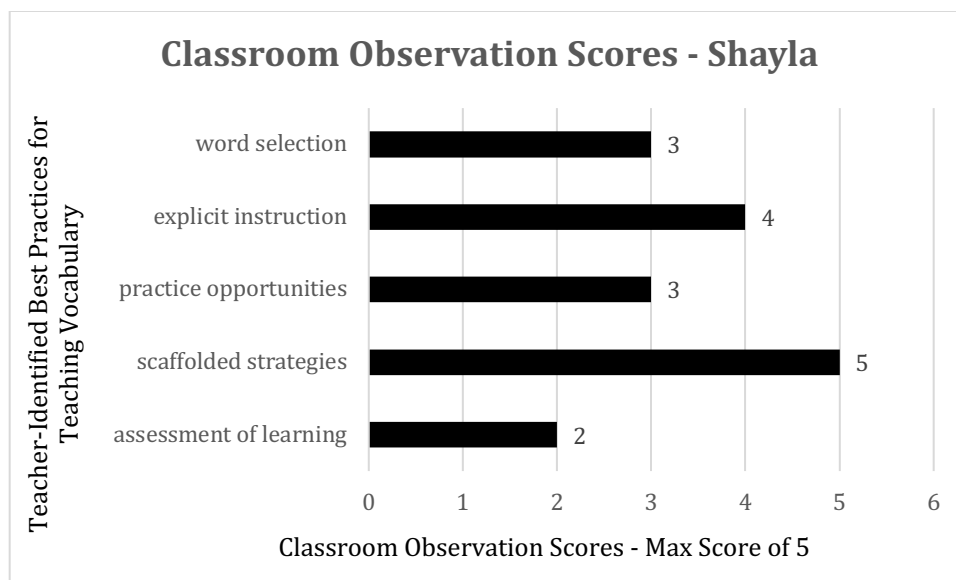


Figure 6. Classroom Observation Scores for Shayla.

District expectations often dictate what teachers spend the most amount of instructional time on in their classrooms. Based on the interview (November 21, 2018), Shayla described the district views and expectations of vocabulary instruction as something “I have never been exposed to.” She further explained, “When searching through staff ELA documents and resources I did find a handout about ‘explicit vocabulary instruction’.” When asked if there were any tensions between what she believed were the best practices for literacy instruction and what the district mandated, she said no, she believes teachers have a lot of freedom to do what we believe is best for the students.

Because teachers’ beliefs about vocabulary instruction can influence their instructional practices toward vocabulary instruction, I reviewed the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool scores an additional time through the lens of the previously identified best practices for teaching vocabulary instruction. I observed Shayla reading aloud to her students during five out of five of the observed lessons. She allowed time for students to

create their own meanings for newly introduced words during four out of five of the lessons observed, and provided rich and explicit instruction on vocabulary strategies throughout four out of five lessons observed. Figure 7 present Shayla’s observed vocabulary instructional score on the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool by effective vocabulary instructional practice (identified in Chapter 2).

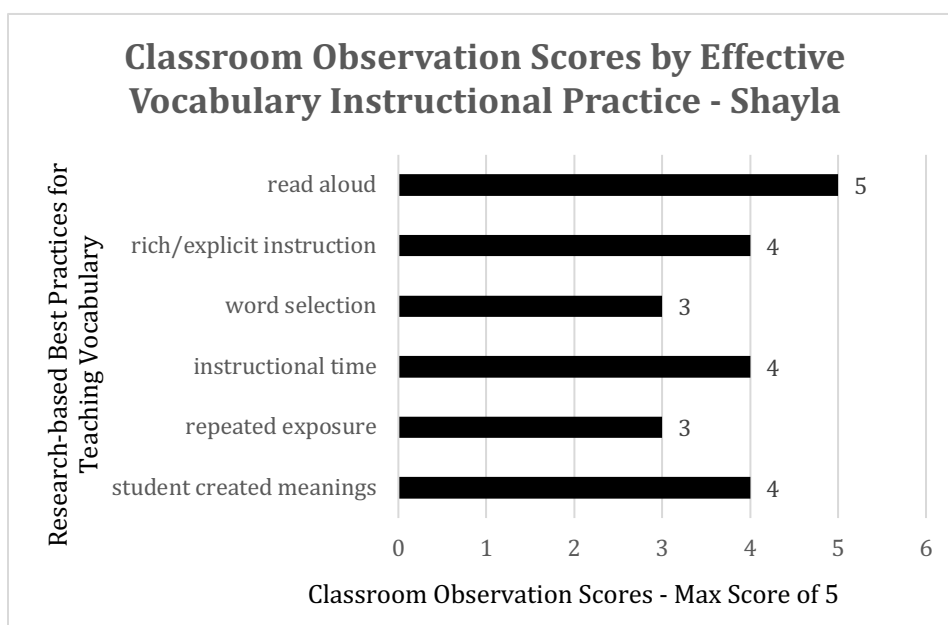


Figure 7. Classroom Observation Scores by Effective Vocabulary Instructional Practice for Shayla.

An example of Shayla teaching vocabulary is when she read aloud the story *The Recess Queen* by Alexis O’Neill (O’Neill, 2002) on December 4, 2018. She started the lesson by gaining the students attention through their class quiet signal and directed their attention to the front of the room. She had an oversized copy of the book to introduce the lesson focus, which was “using context clues to understand words in stories.” Shayla set the purpose of the lesson through the exchange below:

Shayla: So today while we are rereading *The Recess Queen*, think about what it means to be a good classroom citizen. Look for characters in the story that are good classroom citizens. We can use the words the author uses to help us figure out what and who are good classroom citizens are. *Shayla displays the first page of the book.* Can anyone describe the girl you see in the illustration? What is her name? What is she doing? Why are the other kids running away?

Student one: Mean Jean. She's really mean to the other kids at recess. She won't let them play things that she wants to play. They are running away because they are scared of her.

Shayla: You're right there she is mean to the other kids so they don't want to play with her. What do you notice about our sentence on this page?

Student two: There is a capital letter at the beginning

Student three: There is a period at the end.

Student four: Mean Jean's name is capitalized because she is a person.

Shayla: Those are all absolutely right! I want to remind everyone of our essential questions we went over yesterday that are up on the board, "How do readers retell text to demonstrate understanding of the central message?" and "How do writers support an opinion?" Today we are going to take a look at new and interesting words in the story. We will use the details in the illustrations as well as other words on the page to figure out the meanings of those unknown words. I'm going to read

aloud this text. You follow along and pay attention to any unfamiliar words you see or hear.

Shayla started to read The Recess Queen while the students followed along. She stopped during the story from time to time to check students' understanding through questions.

Shayla: What do these two pages tell you about how Jean gets along with the other kids?

Student one: She's really mean to them.

Student two: She seems like a bully.

Student three: She pushes the kids down and calls them mean things.

After a first read through of the story, Shayla asks students to turn to a partner and discuss the following questions (both students were given a chance to listen and speak through a cooperative learning strategy the class uses):

1) What do the illustrations tell you about how Jean treats other people?

2) What do the other children think about Jean?

After the students responded to the questions orally, Shayla asked them to draw pictures in their reader and writer journals to support their answers about Jean and the other characters. Once students completed this activity, Shayla continued

with a discussion about the reading.

Shayla: I notice the word “’em” is used on page 35. Listen. “She’d push ‘em and smooosh ‘em...” The word ‘em is a short way of saying them. Who is Jean pushing and smooshing?

Student five: The other kids.

Shayla: You’re right, she is pushing and smooshing the other kids. I noticed there are some other funny words on page 35. Listen as I reread it out loud. *Shayla read page 35.* Which are the made-up words? Let’s make a chart of the made-up words.

Shayla makes a chart with the class of the made-up words from that part of the story (the words included smooosh, lollapaloosh, slammer, kitz, and kajammer.)

Shayla: Think about what the rest of the sentence says about how Jean acts. How are all these made-up words alike?

Student six: They are all mean words.

Shayla: Tell me more. What do you mean by “mean words?”

Student six: They are the mean things Jean does to the other kids.

Shayla: Yes! Thank you for explaining what you meant. I want everyone to think about the words and the pictures. Where do you think the story takes place?

Student seven: At school.

Student eight: At recess.

Shayla: The setting of the story is at recess during the school day. I want everyone to look at page 32. Listen to this sentence. “Mean Jean was recess queen and nobody said anything different.” What do you think the word ‘nobody’ means? I’m going to give you a few seconds of think time and then have you turn to your partner to talk about the word ‘nobody’ with them.

Students quietly thought about the word ‘nobody’ then turned to their table partners when Shayla gave the signal to begin discussing. One partner listened actively while the other person explained what they thought nobody meant to them. After one minute they changed roles. The partner who had been listening was now in charge of sharing while the other partner listened. They shared/listened for another minute. The students then turned their attention back to Shayla as she did the class quiet signal.

Shayla: Thank you all for sharing with your partners. Next, we are going to work on writing a sentence using the word ‘nobody’. Please get out your readers’ and writers’ workbooks and turn to page 97 (Shown in Figure 8 below.)

DIRECTIONS Draw the word below in the box. Then write a sentence using the word.

nobody




Figure 8. Workbook page 97 from *ReadyGen* First Grade Literacy Program (Pearson, 2019).

Time was spent on vocabulary instruction during four out of five of the observations. One observation was devoted to segmenting and blending words from the reading story. Instruction incorporating pre-selected vocabulary words was present during three out of five of the observed lessons, meaning Shayla would explicitly state and show students the selected words from the text, including words which may have been previously discussed in prior lessons. I counted this as not being observed if the words selected were not explicitly stated or spoken about outside of the context of the story read aloud. Repeated exposure to the introduced words through extension activities or independent practice was observed during three out of five of the lessons. Overall based on the observation data, Shayla provided instruction through read aloud texts, rich/explicit instruction, instruction on pre-selected words, instructional time focused on vocabulary, repeated exposure of words and student created meanings of vocabulary words a lot in her

classroom.

In sum, Shayla has a positive attitude toward vocabulary instruction and thinks literacy is a necessary and key component of teaching students to be successful in academics and later in life. Shayla believes students learn literacy best by being in a literacy rich environment that values learning, exposure to appropriate materials available on students' academic level, and explicit teaching of literacy skills. Shayla shared that the most effective practices in her classroom when teaching vocabulary are a) exposure to unknown words through read alouds, b) informal and formal assessments, and c) repetition of words.

Using the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool (Appendix D), I observed Shayla reading aloud to her students during all five of the observation times. She provided rich and explicit instruction on vocabulary strategies throughout four of the five lessons observed, and instruction was focused on vocabulary instructional strategies and skills during four of the five lessons observed. I observed instruction incorporating additional exposure to words three out of five lessons observed.

Overall based on the observation data, Shayla consistently selects and teaches words, implements explicit instruction, scaffolds instruction, and provides opportunities for students to practice using words. However, I rarely observed Shayla assess her students' learning during the observations.

When I viewed my observations of Shayla through an effective vocabulary instruction lens based on the research provided in Chapter 2, I observed Shayla reading

aloud to her students during all five of the observation times. She provided rich and explicit instruction on vocabulary strategies throughout four of the five lessons observed, and instruction was focused on vocabulary instructional strategies and skills during four of the five lessons observed. She provided instruction on pre-selected vocabulary words three out of five lessons observed and directed the students to develop self-created meanings four out of five lessons observed. Overall, based on the observation data, Shayla consistently reads aloud, implements rich/explicit instruction, focuses instructional time on vocabulary, selects and teaches specific vocabulary, allows time for student to create meanings through providing word definitions, and provides students with repeated exposure to vocabulary words.

Lindy

Lindy has been a classroom teacher for six years at CSES. She has taught kindergarten for the past three years, as well as first grade for three years prior to moving to kindergarten. Before she was a classroom teacher she served as a district literacy tutor for one year. CSES serves 750 students in grades prekindergarten through fifth grade, with 77% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunches and school fees. Students at MSES are classified as 44% European American, 21% Hispanic, 22% African American, and 14% other. Lindy currently teaches a class of 19 kindergarteners, 11 boys and eight girls. Lindy has eight students are English language learners (ELLs) and receive English as a second language (ESOL) services outside the classroom.

Lindy's classroom has an inviting atmosphere even before you even enter the door. She has student work displayed in the hallway along with a description of what state standard the

work covers. The first time I observed in her classroom, the class had completed a unit on kindness and had drawn a picture accompanied by a sentence about how they were going to sprinkle kindness around. These drawings were hanging in the hallway when I arrived and immediately showed that teachers and students alike take pride in a positive classroom culture. The door to the classroom is covered with a classroom mosaic with all students and teacher names written on a heart. When I entered the classroom, I saw six hexagon tables set up with child sized chairs at each one. Each student has their own name tag at their assigned seat, and community supplies are available at each table. Aside from student tables, there is a teacher area with a large desk, bookshelf and double door cabinet. In the front of the classroom is a carpeted area with a rocking chair I later learned is for read aloud activities, morning community, and whole group activities. Each student in the class is assigned an iPad for school use, and there are desktop computers available as a reading center. There are many literacy resources on the walls of the classroom, including a word wall, a letter of the week bulletin board, a phonetic alphabet poster and a writing center with questions written on sentence strips and hung up for students to answer.

Lindy shared that she views literacy as the ability for someone to be able to read and write and when asked what she values most about literacy, Lindy indicated that she believes literacy is important and needed to be successful in life. She says that literacy is not only needed to help students be successful academically, but it is needed to function successfully in society.

Lindy believes students learn literacy best in a print rich environment with books available for read aloud and modeling of literacy practices, as well as materials for hands on activities that allow for extension of the previously learned skills. This was evident as soon as I walked in Lindy's classroom. I observed around 20 baskets of books available for students

leveled by reading ability, as well as signage for several literacy centers including a big book center where students could read as partners oversized copies of books the class had previously read altogether, a poetry center where students attempted to recreate and read a poem written on sentence strips, and a word wall resided on a large white board in the middle of the wall where all students could utilize it for their writing center. Based on the larger number of books and other materials, it was clear that Lindy values literacy.

Lindy indicated that the practices most effective in her classroom when teaching vocabulary are a) reading aloud to students, b) asking students to create definitions, b) creating pictorial representations, and d) connecting new words and word meanings to previously learned words (Interview, January 16, 2019). Using the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool (Appendix D), I was able to observe several of these practices during vocabulary instruction and I report the number of times the behavior was observed during the five observations in Figure 9 below. Lindy started each lesson by providing students with the new word(s) that they would be learning (five out of five lessons observed) and introducing the word and its meaning prior to reading it in context (five out of five lessons observed). She read aloud to her students all five times I observed, and provided explicit vocabulary strategies (e.g., using context clues, morphological analysis) during four out of five lessons. She asked students to share what they already knew about the meaning of the new word(s) she was introducing every observation (five out of five lessons observed), and incorporated a way to build on students' prior knowledge of the word meanings four of the five lessons observed. However, while Lindy stated that connecting new words and word meanings to previously learned words was one of the most effective practices for teaching vocabulary, I did not observe that occurring in her classroom (zero out of five lessons observed). When asked why she didn't connect new words to

previously learned words she said she was trying to teach the curriculum with fidelity (a new literacy curriculum the district adopted in the fall 2018) and ensure she covered all parts of the lesson in the teacher’s manual. Overall based on the observation data, Lindy assesses student learning, selects new vocabulary to teach, implements explicit instruction, provides strategies for vocabulary learning, and gives students multiple opportunities to practice using new vocabulary.

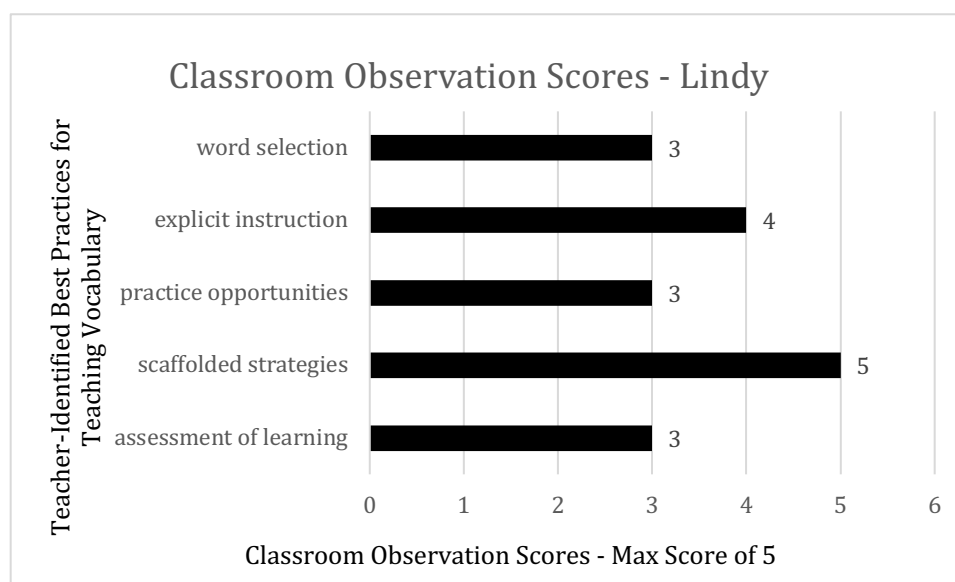


Figure 9. Classroom Observation Scores for Lindy.

District expectations often dictate what teachers spend the most amount of instructional time on in their classrooms. Based on the interview (January 16, 2019), Lindy described the district views and expectations of vocabulary instruction as “a quick here is the word and this is what it means.” She further explained, “Sometimes you have to do more to help students really gain an understanding for the word.” When asked if there were any tensions between what she believed were the best practices for literacy instruction and what the district mandated, she said no, that she follows the districts guidelines and

expectations, but likes to extend beyond what is expected to really make real-world connections for her students through showing them pictures or real-life items to help them make a better connection or understand the meaning better. She also prefers to incorporate music and gestures or find a way to connect words for students through activities they like.

Because teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction can influence their instructional practices, I reviewed the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool scores an additional time through the lens of the previously identified best practices for teaching vocabulary instruction. I observed Lindy reading aloud to her students during five out of five of the observed lessons. She allowed time for students to create their own meanings for newly introduced words during four out of five of the lessons observed, and provided rich and explicit instruction on vocabulary strategies throughout four out of five lessons observed.

Figure 10 presents Lindy's observed vocabulary instructional score on the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool by effective vocabulary instructional practice (identified in Chapter 2).

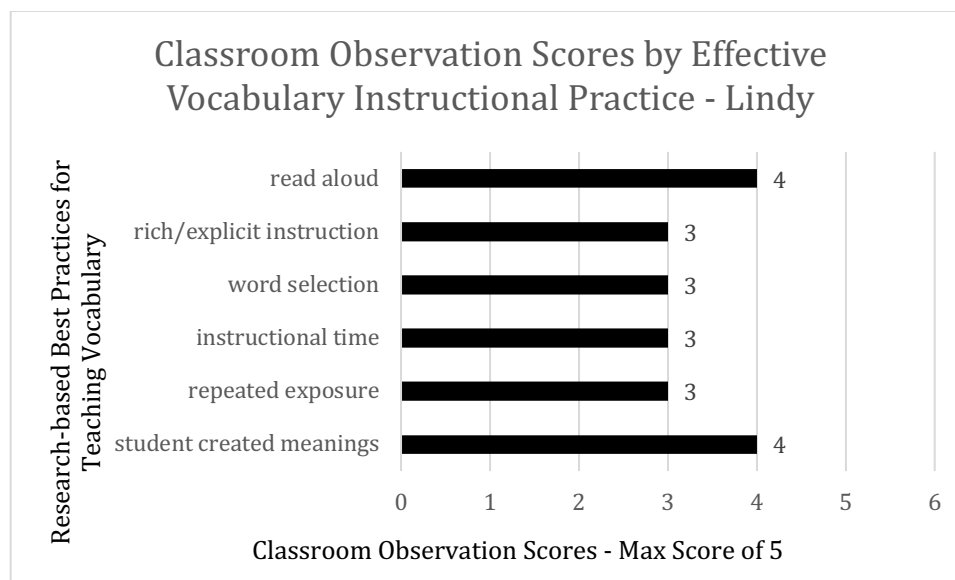


Figure 10. Classroom Observation Scores by Effective Vocabulary Instructional Practice for Lindy.

An example of Lindy teaching vocabulary is when she read aloud the story *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats (Keats, 1962) on January 24, 2019. She started the lesson by gathering all of the students on the carpet at the front of her room and had an oversized copy of the book on the easel next to her to introduce the lesson focus, which was “Identify key details about the major events in a story.” Lindy set the purpose of the lesson through the exchange below:

Lindy: Identifying the major events, or what happens, in a story and how characters react to those events will help us understand the story. (*Lindy shows the front cover of the story to the students.*) This is *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats. What do you see in the picture on the cover?

Student one: Snow!

Lindy: You're right there is snow. What else do you see?

Student two: A kid playing.

Lindy: There is a kid playing. Today we are going to learn how to identify key details about the events in a story. We will see how those events affect the main character, a little boy named Peter. I'm going to read aloud this text. Your job is to listen carefully for the things that happen in this story and the order they happen in. I'll stop from time to time for us to talk about what I've read.

Lindy stopped during the story and asked the students to think closely.

Lindy: What kind of day is it?

Student one: Cold.

Student two: Snowy.

Student three: White.

Lindy: How do you know it is cold, snowy, and white?

Student four: Because the pictures show us.

Lindy: You are right the pictures show us, but is there anything else that helps us know that it is cold, snowy, and white?

Student five: The book says it is.

Lindy: You are right! The author uses words to describe what the day is like so we as readers know what Peter is seeing and feeling. As we read stories, we sometimes come across words that we have not seen before. Authors give us clues to understand those words. Sometimes we need to look closer at a new word to understand what it means.

Lindy: One of our words is 'piled.' It is in our story. The author says "After breakfast he put on his snow suit and ran outside. The snow was piled up very high along the street to make a path for walking. Can anyone tell me what piled means?"

Student one: Like, you can have a pile of leaves.

Lindy: That is a great example! Can you tell me what it means to have a pile of leaves?

Student one: You have a lot of them all in one spot.

Lindy: Yes! Exactly, it means to have a large amount of something in one area. In the story it says "the snow was piled up very high" because the town had gotten a large amount of snow and the people had to stack it up or pile it up very high to get it off the sidewalks. A similar word to this is "packed", like to say the roads are snow packed or have a large amount of snow on them. Or someone might say their ice cream sundae is "piled high with toppings." I like to say to the people making my sundae to "heap" on the toppings, which is another word to say there is a lot of something.

Lindy: I want everyone to turn to their partner right now and talk to them about something you might see that is “piled” up. I’m going to give you 30 seconds of think time and then partner A can start talking to partner B about their example.

Students then turned to their predetermined partners on the carpet. They sat still and quiet until Lindy told them to start discussing with their partner. One partner listened actively while the other person explained their example of piled to them. After one minute they thanked their partner for sharing and changed roles. The partner who had been listening was now in charge of sharing their example while the other partner listened. They shared/listened for another minute and then thanked their partner. The students then turned their attention back to Lindy as she did the class quiet signal.

Lindy: Thank you all for sharing with your partners. When we think about the word piled and what we have talked about, do you think you could draw a picture of something piled?

Students: Yes!

Lindy: Okay please go back to your tables and get out workbook page 153 (Shown in Figure 11 below). At the top it has the word piled with a box underneath. Please take your crayons and draw a picture of the word piled.

Name _____	Benchmark Vocabulary
DIRECTIONS Choose a word from below and draw it in the box.	
piled	dragged
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 80px; width: 100%;"></div>	

Figure 11. Workbook page 153 from *ReadyGen* Kindergarten Literacy Program (Pearson, 2019).

Time was spent on vocabulary instruction during three out of five of lessons. The other two lessons briefly incorporated some of the components of vocabulary instruction and were primarily focused on phonics and phonemic awareness instruction. Instruction on pre-selected vocabulary words was present during three out of five of the observed lessons, meaning Lindy would explicitly state and show students the selected words from the text, including words which may have been previously discussed in prior lessons. I counted this as not being observed if the words selected were not explicitly stated or spoken about outside of the context of the story read aloud. As stated in the previous section, words from previous lessons were not focused on during the observed class time due to a focus on the fidelity of the district-approved curriculum. Repeated exposure to the introduced words through extension activities or independent practice was observed during three out of five

of the lessons.

In sum, Lindy has a positive attitude toward vocabulary instruction and thinks literacy is important and needed to be successful in life. She says the practices most effective in her classroom when teaching vocabulary are a) reading aloud to students, b) asking for student created definitions, b) creating pictorial representations, and d) connecting new words and word meanings to previously learned words. Using the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool (Appendix D), I observed Lindy a) start each lesson with providing students new word(s) that they would be learning (five out of five lessons observed), b) introduce the word and its meaning prior to reading it in context (five out of five lessons observed), c) read aloud to her students all five times I observed, d) provide explicit vocabulary strategies (e.g., using context clues, morphological analysis) during four out of five lessons, e) ask students to share what they already knew about the meaning of the new word(s) she was introducing every observation, and f) incorporate a way to build on students' prior knowledge of the word meanings four of the five lessons observed. However, while Lindy stated that connecting new words and word meanings to previously learned words was one of the most effective practices for teaching vocabulary, I did not observe that occurring in her classroom. When I viewed my observations of Lindy through a research-based best practices for vocabulary instruction lens, I observed Lindy: a) reading aloud to her students (five out of five lessons observed), b) allowing time for student created meanings (four out of five lessons observed), and c) providing rich and explicit instruction on vocabulary strategies (four out of five lessons observed). Instructional time spent on vocabulary instruction (three out of five lessons observed), instruction on pre-selected words (three out of five lessons

observed) and repeated exposure (three out of five lessons observed). Overall, based on the observation data, both the teacher reported best practices for teaching vocabulary and the effective vocabulary instructional practices, Lindy frequently engaged her students in effective literacy instruction.

Barb

Barb has been a classroom teacher for 11 years total, 10 of those years at CSES. She has taught first grade for all 10 years at CSES, as well as an additional year at a different school site. CSES serves 750 students in grades prekindergarten through fifth grade, with 77% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunches and school fees. Students at MSES are classified as 44% European American, 21% Hispanic, 22% African American, and 14% other. Barb currently teaches a class of 18 first graders, 11 boys and seven girls. Barb has three students that are English language learners (ELLs) and receive English as a second language (ESOL) services outside the classroom.

Barb's classroom has a minimalistic environment, which was pleasant to the eye. Instead of having something on every wall, her walls were mostly bare, with the exception of district mandated signage and curriculum tools (e.g., number line, alphabet for handwriting) She had student work displayed in the hallway along with a description of what state standard the work covers. The first time I observed in her classroom, the class had completed a unit on plants and flowers and created life cycle of a plant flip books. The door to the classroom was bare but had a nameplate next to the door to signify I was in the right classroom. When I entered the classroom, I saw six hexagon tables set up with small child-sized chairs at each one. Each student had their own nametag at their assigned seat. Aside from student tables, there is a teacher area with a large

desk, bookshelf and double door cabinet. In the front of the classroom is a carpeted area I learned was for read aloud activities, morning community, and whole group activities. Each student in the class was assigned an iPad for school use, and there were desktop computers available as a reading center. There were minimal resources on the walls of the classroom, including a word wall and an alphabet hung above the smart board showing the handwriting curriculum.

Barb shared that she views literacy as a wide variety of skills that are necessary to read and write, and when asked what she values most about literacy, Barb indicated that she values literacy's ability to make the world accessible. She says literacy helps us make connections to each other and text as well as learning more about ourselves.

Barb believes students learn literacy best through hands-on practice and lots of exposure to quality reading and writing, as well as opportunities to practice their skills. She went on to say teachers needed to model how important reading and writing are and how we work with text to make meaning. I was able to observe Barb's instruction five times. I observed several baskets of books available for students leveled by topic, such as 'animal books', 'weather books', and 'holidays', as well as standards posted for several literacy centers including a big book center where students could read as partners oversized copies of books the class had previously read altogether, a poetry center where students attempted to read a poem from the reading curriculum re-written on sentence strips, and a word wall resided on a large white board in the middle of the wall where all students could utilize it for their writing center. Based on the larger number of books and other materials, it was clear that Barb values literacy.

Barb indicated that the practices most effective in her classroom when teaching vocabulary are a) reading aloud to students, b) student created resources, b) creating pictorial representations, and d) hands-on learning opportunities (Interview, November 21, 2018). Using

the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool (Appendix D), I was able to observe several of these practices during vocabulary instruction and I report the number of times I observed the behavior during the five observations in Figure 12 below. Barb started some lessons by providing students with the new word(s) that they would be learning (three out of five lessons observed) and introducing the word and its meaning prior to reading it in context (four out of five lessons observed). She read aloud to her students all five times I observed, and provided explicit vocabulary strategies (e.g., using context clues, morphological analysis) during four out of five lessons. She asked students to share what they already knew about the meaning of the new word(s) she was introducing every observation (five out of five lessons observed), and incorporated a way to build on students' prior knowledge of the word meanings four of the five lessons observed. Barb connected new words and word meanings to previously learned words four out of five lessons observed.

Overall, based on the observation data, Barb frequently assesses student learning, selects new vocabulary words to teach, implements explicit instruction, scaffolds strategy instruction, and provides students with practice using new vocabulary. Figure 12 presents Barb's observed vocabulary instructional scores on the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool.

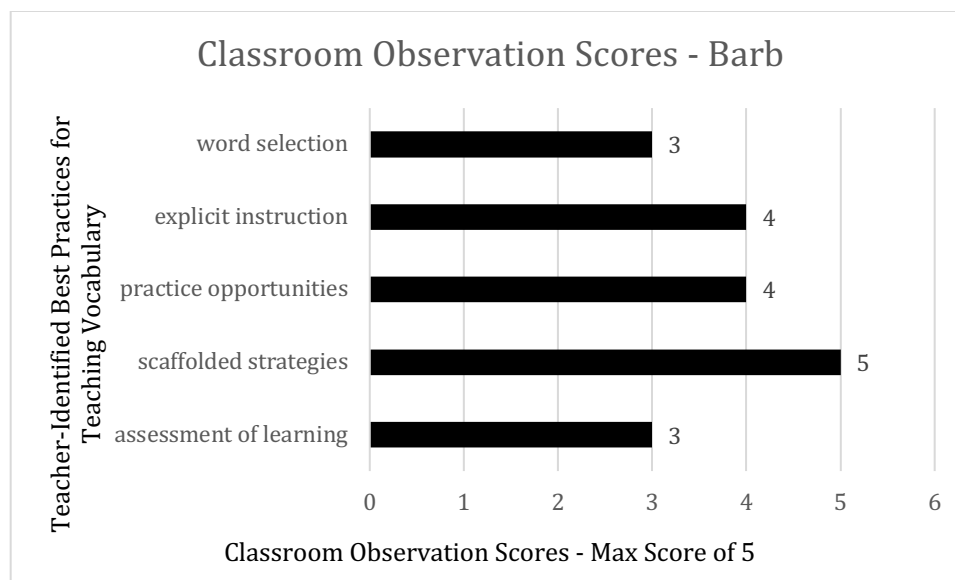


Figure 12. Classroom Observation Scores for Barb.

Because teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction can influence their instructional practices toward vocabulary instruction, I reviewed the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool scores an additional time through the lens of the previously identified best practices for teaching vocabulary instruction. I observed Barb reading aloud to her students during five out of five of the observed lessons. She allowed time for students to create their own meanings for newly introduced words during four out of five of the lessons observed, and provided rich and explicit instruction on vocabulary strategies throughout four out of five lessons observed.

One example of Barb teaching vocabulary is when she read aloud the story *Far from Home* by Sue Pickford (Pickford, 2015) on February 27, 2019. She started the lesson by gathering all of the students on the carpet at the front of her room and had an oversized copy of the book on the easel next to her to introduce the lesson focus, which was "Use

Author's Words to Understand Characters.” Barb set the purpose of the lesson through the exchange below:

Barb: We are going to read part of *Far from Home* and look closely at the words the author uses to tell about the characters. (*Barb shows the front cover of the story to the students.*) Remember when we read this story yesterday and learned that Bryan in our story has to move to China. Bryan does not know anything about China before he gets there. One way he decided he can learn about China is to read stories about the culture. A myth is one type of story he can read. Myths are old stories about something in nature and helps explain why things happen. We are going to talk more about myths today after we review part of our book.

Barb: Let's review our Essential Questions for this week. “How do readers use illustrations and details in literary and informational texts?” and “How do writers use what they read to share information about a topic?” In this lesson we are going to learn how readers can look for words and phrases in a story to help them understand the characters and how they feel. Follow along as I read pages three through seven in our book.

Barb read aloud to students while holding up the big book to show the students the words and pictures.

Barb: What happens at the beginning of the story?

Student one: The boy is moving to China.

Barb: You're right he is moving to China. Look at the pictures. How does Bryan feel about moving to China?

Student two: He's sad, he doesn't want to move away from his school and his friends.

Barb: Who are the characters in the book so far?

Student one: The boy.

Barb: What is the boy's name?

Student two: Bryan

Barb: Who else have we read about?

Student three: Dad.

Student four: His mom.

Student five: Bryan's friends.

Barb: We talked about how Bryan felt about moving, but what about his mom and dad? How did they feel?

Student five: They are happy.

Barb: And where is Bryan at the beginning of the story?

Student six: In his house.

Barb: What details does the author tell us about Bryan's house and neighborhood?

Student seven: His house is clean.

Student eight: His neighborhood has trees.

Student nine: His house has a fence around it.

Barb: How does Bryan feel about living in his neighborhood?

Student 10: He likes living there.

Barb: One of the things (student seven) just told me about Bryan's house is that it is clean. We know that from the author using the word 'neatly' to tell us how things are 'neatly placed' inside Bryan's house. Clean and neat are synonyms, or words that mean almost the same thing. Can you think of another word that would be a synonym for clean and neat?

Student one: spotless.

Barb: That is a great example!

Barb: Another word the author uses in our story is "shocked." The author tells us that Bryan is "shocked" to find out he is moving to China. I want you to turn to your shoulder partner and talk to them about a time that you were shocked. I'm

going to give you one minute.

Barb set the online timer for one minute. Students then turned to their predetermined partners at their table. One partner listened actively while the other person explained their example of shocked to them. After one minute they thanked their partner for sharing and changed roles. The partner who had been listening was now in charge of sharing their example while the other partner listened. They shared/listened for another minute and then thanked their partner.

Barb: Thank you all for sharing with your partners. Now you are going to choose between shocked and neatly and draw a picture of the word. Then you can write a sentence using the word. Please get out your readers and writers journals and turn to page 167 (See Figure 13).

DIRECTIONS Choose a word from below and draw it in the box. Then write a sentence using the word.

neatly shocked




Figure 13. Workbook page 167 from *ReadyGen* First Grade Literacy Program (Pearson, 2019)

Time was spent on vocabulary instruction during four out of five of lessons. The fifth observed lesson was primarily focused on phonics instruction. Instruction on pre-selected words was present during three out of five of the observed lessons, meaning Barb explicitly stated and showed students the selected words from the text, including words which may have been previously discussed in prior lessons. I counted this as not being observed if the words selected were not explicitly stated or spoken about outside of the context of the story read aloud. As stated in the previous section, words from previous lessons were not focused on during the observed class time due to a focus on the fidelity of the district-approved curriculum. Repeated exposure to the introduced words through extension activities or independent practice was observed during three out of five of the lessons. Figure 14 presents Barb's observed score on the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool by effective vocabulary instructional practices identified in Chapter 2.

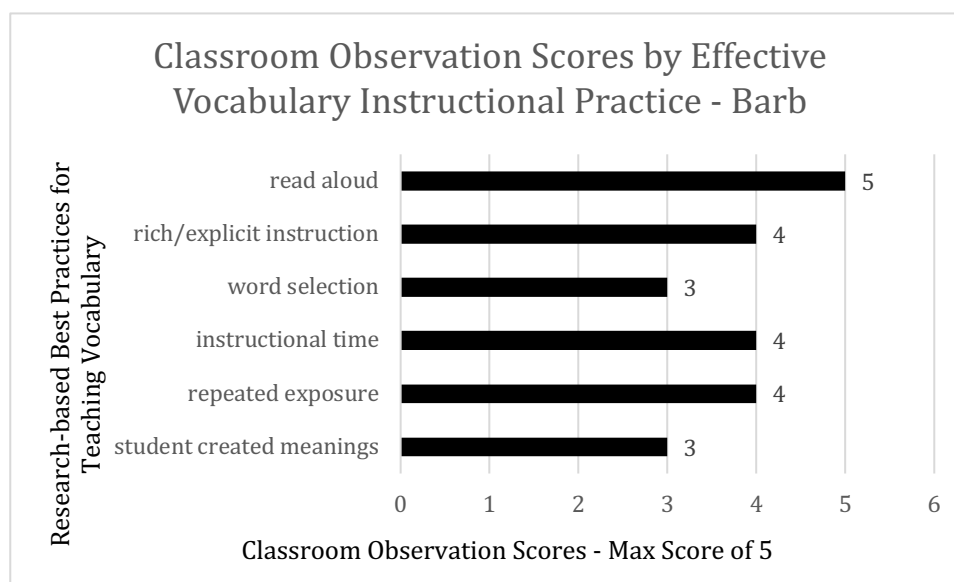


Figure 14. Classroom Observation Scores by Effective Vocabulary Instructional Practice

for Barb.

In sum, Barb has a positive attitude toward vocabulary instruction and thinks literacy is important and needed to be successful in life. Barb indicated that the practices most effective in her classroom when teaching vocabulary are a) reading aloud to students, b) student created resources, b) creating pictorial representations, and d) hands-on learning opportunities. Using the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool (Appendix D), I observed Barb a) start some lessons with providing students new word(s) that they would be learning (three out of five lessons observed), b) introduce the word and its meaning prior to reading it in context (four out of five lessons observed), c) read aloud to her students all times I observed (five out of five lessons observed), d) provide explicit vocabulary strategies (e.g., using context clues, morphological analysis) during four out of five lessons, e) ask students to share what they already knew about the meaning of the new word(s) she was introducing every observation, and f) incorporate a way to build on students' prior knowledge of the word meanings four of the five lessons observed. When I viewed my observations of Barb through a research-based best practices for vocabulary instruction lens, I observed Barb: a) reading aloud to her students (five out of five lessons observed), b) allowing time for student created meanings (three out of five lessons observed), and c) providing rich and explicit instruction on vocabulary strategies (four out of five lessons observed). Instructional time spent on vocabulary instruction (four out of five lessons observed), instruction on pre-selected words (three out of five lessons observed) and repeated exposure (four out of five lessons observed). Overall, based on the observation data, both the teacher reported best practices for teaching vocabulary and the effective vocabulary instructional practices, Barb frequently implemented effective

vocabulary instruction in her classroom, defined as being observed three to five days out of five total observation days.

Summary of Chapter 4

In this chapter, I presented the findings for each teacher. In Chapter 5, I describe the major findings in terms of the research questions and discuss the implications. I also make suggestions for future research, present limitations of the study, and discuss final thoughts.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Vocabulary knowledge has long been recognized for the important role it plays in the development of reading skills and it has been directly tied to reading success (Biemiller, 2001). Students who have larger oral vocabularies than their grade level peers will recognize and understand more of the words they are asked to decode, which in turn allows them to comprehend what they read. Research shows that students from low SES homes begin school with considerably fewer words in their vocabulary than that of their peers from more affluent homes (Hart & Risley, 1995). Consequently, students from low SES backgrounds need curriculum and teaching centered on instruction of vocabulary (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013). In turn, teachers need intensified knowledge and skills to provide rich vocabulary instruction, which in turn increases students' word knowledge (Nagy, 2005). As the academic reading achievement among students from low SES homes declined or remained stagnant (Reardon, 2013), there is a need to better support teachers so that they can provide more effective vocabulary instruction to young students. However, to provide professional learning to teachers, one must first understand their current beliefs, knowledge, and instructional practices regarding vocabulary. Thus, the present study investigated the beliefs and knowledge about vocabulary instruction of teachers serving students from low SES homes, and explored the alignment of teacher beliefs with the type of vocabulary instruction they currently implement through the lens of the sociocultural theory.

In the following section, I addressed the three research questions.

Major Findings

Question One: What are teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction?

Several findings emerged from the data (see Table 4). First, based on interviews, the teachers' view themselves as responsible for their students' learning. For example, when asked what they believed their responsibility was when teaching students on literacy skills, one participant responded, "My job is to teach students skills they need to be successful. This includes all the skills needed for them to be proficient readers, like vocabulary, phonics, and phonemic awareness." Another participant said, "I ultimately want all of my students reading at a J or higher by the time they leave my classroom. If I don't get them reading, I am setting them up for failure down the line." Beliefs are deeply personal and are individual truths one holds (Rokeach, 1968). Beliefs have a stronger influence on behavior than cognitive knowledge (Bandura, 1982; Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1968). Personal beliefs have a strong effect on professional practice and predict a person's behavior more than personal knowledge. For the current study, it was important to understand teachers' beliefs about vocabulary study because beliefs influence behavior, so teachers' belief in the value and effectiveness of vocabulary instruction must be considered in order to enact a desired change in their teaching behavior. The theoretical framework further demonstrates the importance of understanding personal beliefs. Sociocultural theory focuses not only on how adults and peers influence an individual's learning, but also on how cultural beliefs and attitudes impact how instruction and learning take place.

Second, teachers believe students' vocabulary knowledge is directly tied to students' reading proficiency and future reading success. For example, teachers often indicated that they explicitly teach vocabulary when asked what they incorporate into their literacy block instruction. One participant also commented that the more a student can connect a new word to a

word they already know, the more likely they are to be able to comprehend what they are reading. This is consistent with Hart and Risley's (1995) research which found that children with large vocabularies acquired new words at a faster rate. A large vocabulary also helps students learn to read. Further, because students with large oral vocabularies tend to understand the meaning the words they decode, they are more likely to comprehend texts they read (Coyne, Capozzoli-Oldham, & Simmons, 2012; Cromley & Azvedo, 2007; Lesaux & Kieffer, 2010; Stahl & Nagy, 2006). The influence of vocabulary knowledge on reading development and comprehension is significant and long lasting (Marzano, 2012).

Third, teachers identified competing district expectations which deter a more full-bodied focus on vocabulary instruction. Two of the teachers stated they would like to teach vocabulary more robustly, but think they lack the time in their instructional day to do so because of several deterrents in their classroom and from the district administration. These findings are consistent with research suggesting that in order to increase students' word learning, instruction should also provide an increase of time to learn new words (Beck & McKeown, 2007; Collins, 2009). For deterrents, teachers identified time-consuming technology components that are required pieces of the district reading curriculum, such as workbook pages and interactive books, which take time away from instruction to utilize. Teachers cited higher student engagement when these components are utilized, but are unsure if achievement is higher as well. Instructional minutes required by the district to be spent on other subject areas also cut into the amount of instruction time spent on vocabulary. Teachers also identified a lack of instructional knowledge in vocabulary, a lack of high-quality vocabulary curriculum, and a high district focus on assessments. Table 3 presents the deterrents teacher data revealed.

Table 3

Deterrents Hindering Teachers from Increased Vocabulary Instructional Time

Teachers	Deterrents (hinder teachers from increased vocabulary instructional time)				
	Time-Consuming Technology Components Required	Instructional Minutes Required in other subjects	Lack of Instructional Knowledge in Vocabulary	Lack of high-quality vocabulary curriculum	District focus on Assessments
Karen		X		X	X
Shayla	X	X	X	X	X
Lindy		X			X
Barb	X	X	X	X	X

Fourth, teachers indicated they would like to have more communication from the district administration regarding vocabulary instruction. For example, one participant said “I try to follow the district guidelines and expectations, but I usually try and go further by making real-world connections. I would love to learn more strategies for how to incorporate vocabulary into additional subjects.” Based on the research, a teacher’s years of experience and quality of training are correlated with students’ academic achievement (Gimbert, Bol, & Wallace, 2007). High quality instruction is defined as instruction provided by teachers who are experienced and have participated in meaningful professional development. Increasing higher level professional development opportunities for teachers may increase their quality and duration of vocabulary instruction.

Fifth, teachers acknowledge that they have seen success in reading proficiency through students who have more vocabulary knowledge. Consequently, they would like to see additional reading proficiency through learning about and utilizing additional vocabulary strategies. For example, one participant remarked, “It is on our grade card for students to be able to figure out unknown words through context, so I think it is essential that we have a higher focus on

vocabulary, which will ultimately lead to higher reading success.” Another participant said, “Sometimes I have to do more than what I’m given (in the curriculum) to help students really gain an understanding of the words. I would love more direction on this during PD (professional development).” Participants cited vocabulary instruction as an area they would like to grow in as a teacher. “Vocabulary instruction is an area where I would like to grow, honestly. I’m very interested in reading research and would like to know more about what the best strategies are for teaching vocabulary in the classroom. I feel like that’s an area where I need to grow.” Another participant even said they didn’t know if they have ever been formally exposed to vocabulary instructional strategies beyond what was written into the reading curriculum adopted by the district. To support students, teachers need the knowledge and skills to provide rich and multifaceted direct instruction to increase student’s vocabulary knowledge (Nagy, 2005). Increasing professional development opportunities for teachers may increase teachers’ confidence in providing high-quality vocabulary knowledge across subjects and encourage teachers to incorporate additional strategies that are less familiar.

Finally, teachers believe vocabulary is an important component of literacy education but question whether the district holds the same views on vocabulary. One participant said she felt the district was more highly focused on math curriculum at district and school level professional development sessions, even though both the district reading and math curriculums were newly adopted for this school year. Another participant said, “I don’t feel like there is tension between what the teachers think they should be teaching and what the district feels should be done exactly, I just think there is a lot of room to grow, both for the teachers and the district as a whole in my opinion.”

In sum, the teachers in this study had a positive attitude toward vocabulary instruction and feel it is an important component of everyday literacy instruction. However, they often were not able to provide lengthy or consistent vocabulary instruction due to competing district priorities, and did not feel confident in how to extend vocabulary into other subject areas beyond literacy.

Table 4
Themes, Meanings, and Examples derived from Teacher Data

Theme	Meaning	Examples
Responsibility for student achievement	Teachers believe they are responsible for student achievement levels, including vocabulary knowledge	<p>Shayla:</p> <p><i>My job is to teach students skills they need to be successful. This includes all the skills needed for them to be proficient readers, like vocabulary, phonics, and phonemic awareness.</i></p> <p>Lindy:</p> <p><i>I ultimately want all of my students reading at a J or higher by the time they leave my class. If I don't get them reading, I am setting them up for failure down the line.</i></p>
Vocabulary knowledge and student reading proficiency	Teachers believe proficient vocabulary knowledge leads to overall proficient reading levels	<p>Karen:</p> <p><i>Especially in students' early years of education vocabulary goes hand in hand with reading proficiency. Connecting vocabulary words to things they already know in their day to day lives builds reading comprehension skills.</i></p> <p>Shayla:</p> <p><i>Phonological awareness skills, concepts of print, and vocabulary are all essential skills that move students towards reading proficiently.</i></p>
Competing district expectations	Teachers desire to teach with a focus more on vocabulary in multiple subjects, but lack	<p>Karen:</p> <p><i>Currently, the school and district has not set high expectations for vocabulary or literacy altogether.</i></p>

deter from vocabulary instruction	time due to district expectations and mandated instructional minutes in subjects.	<p>Lindy: <i>More of the curriculum we use has parts of the lesson that focus on the vocabulary, but I feel it is a quick here is the word and what it means. I've never really felt like I know how long or how much I'm supposed to focus on vocabulary and I run out of minutes in the day.</i></p>
Additional district input on vocabulary instruction	Teachers desire additional district input on vocabulary instruction	<p>Lindy: <i>I try to follow the district guidelines and expectations, but I usually try and go further by making real-world connections. I would love to learn more strategies for how to incorporate vocabulary into additional subjects.</i></p>
Success in reading via vocabulary instruction	<p>Teachers would like to see additional reading proficiency through utilizing additional vocabulary strategies.</p> <p>Teachers desire additional professional development opportunities on vocabulary and to learn more about research on vocabulary.</p>	<p>Karen: <i>It is on our grade card for our students to be able to figure out unknown words through context, so I feel it is essential that we have a higher focus on vocabulary which will ultimately lead to higher reading success.</i></p> <p>Lindy: <i>Sometimes I have to do more than what I'm given to help students really gain an understanding of the words. I would love more direction on this during PD (professional development).</i></p> <p>Barb: <i>Vocabulary instruction is an area where I would like to grow, honestly. I'm very interested in reading research and would like to know more about what the best strategies are for teaching vocabulary in the classroom. I feel like that's an area where I need to grow.</i></p> <p>Shayla: <i>I have never been exposed to formal strategies for vocabulary instruction</i></p>

Vocabulary isn't a district focus	Teachers view vocabulary instruction as beneficial but question whether the district holds the same views	<p><i>in my grade level beyond our teacher's manuals.</i></p> <p>Karen: <i>We have a very high math focus this year and literacy and reading have been pushed to the back.</i></p> <p>Barb: <i>I don't feel like there is tension between what the teachers think they should be teaching and what the district feels should be done exactly, I just think there is a lot of room to grow, both for the teachers and the district as a whole in my opinion.</i></p>
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Question Two: How do teachers' beliefs align with their instructional practice?

Overall, all of the teachers (four out of four) had a positive attitude toward vocabulary instruction and view literacy as an important component of their classroom curriculum. This is important considering the student populations at both school sites were performing below the 'proficient' level (on average) on the Kansas Assessment Program's English Language Arts State Assessment. These attitudes and beliefs likely mean teachers are focused on incorporating literacy and vocabulary into their daily instruction, and, in fact, they indicated they believe it was their own responsibility to develop readers and lifelong learners in their classes.

Across the four teachers, when asked how students learn vocabulary best, they responded with the following: additional practice with words/repetition of words (two out of four teachers), assessment of learning (two out of four teachers), rich/ explicit teaching of strategies (three out of four teachers), ability level instruction (scaffolded strategies) (three out of four teachers), and student created meanings (three out of four teachers).

The identified practices align with what the theoretical framework suggests, which says everything is learned on two levels. First, through interaction with others, and then integrated

into the individual's mental structure. All of the teacher identified best practices fall within one of Vygotsky's two levels. Rich/Explicit instruction of strategies, assessment of learning, pre-selected word lists, and scaffolded strategies all fall within the first category, interaction with others. These practices all require a student to acquire knowledge through interaction with others, such as the instruction of a teacher or reciprocal teaching from a peer. The second level, the individual's mental structure would include practice opportunities, where each student could use their own understanding to extend their learning beyond the interaction with others.

The observation data scores revealed that scaffolded vocabulary strategies were presented 19 out of 20 days observed, and rich and explicit vocabulary instruction was observed 16 days out of the 20 days data was collected. Extension activities for additional practice were provided 13 out of 20 days observed. Assessment of learning (both informal and formal) was observed 12 out of 20 days observed, and instruction on pre-selected words was observed 11 out of 20 days. Overall, assessment of learning, scaffolded strategies, practice opportunities, and explicit instruction were observed 'a lot', defined as being observed 12 or more times out of 20 observations, while instruction utilizing pre-selected words was observed a little, defined as being observed eight to 11 times out of 20 observations. Figure 15 presents the scores for all four teachers across all vocabulary strategies on the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool.

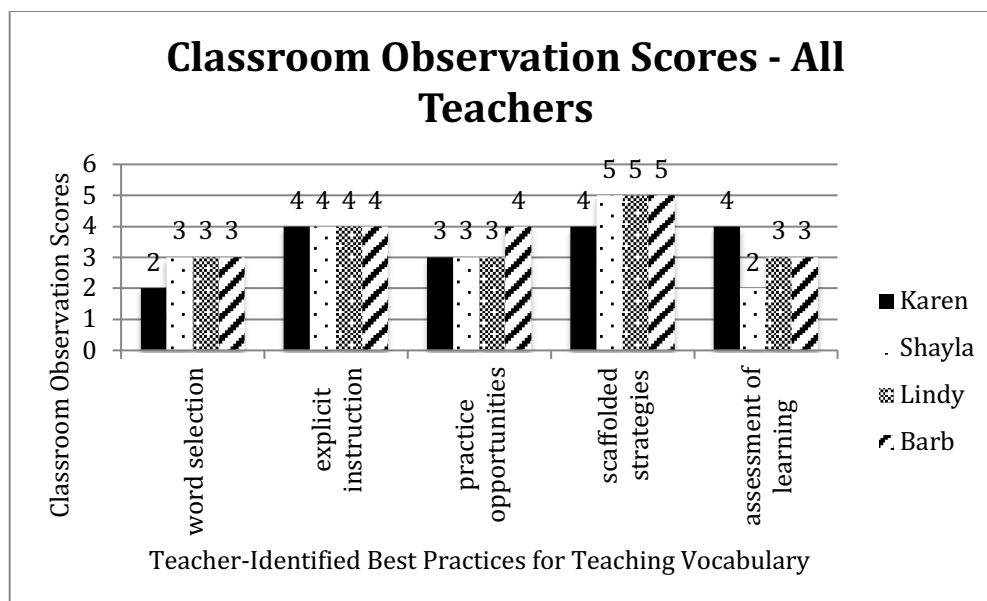


Figure 15. Classroom Observation Scores for All Teachers.

Question Three: How do teachers' instructional practices align with research about effective vocabulary instruction?

To compare the observed vocabulary practices to research based effective vocabulary instruction discussed in Chapter 2, I looked for the following vocabulary instructional practices in each observation: read aloud instruction, rich/explicit instruction, instruction using pre-selected words, instructional time spent on vocabulary instruction, repeated exposure to vocabulary words being introduced, and opportunities for student created word meanings.

The theoretical framework suggests the research based strategies would result in language and vocabulary proficiency through the lens of the sociocultural theory. All of the practices fall within one of Vygotsky's two levels. Rich/Explicit instruction of strategies, read-aloud instruction, pre-selected word lists, and instructional time spent on vocabulary instruction all fall within the first category, interaction with others. These practices all require a student to

acquire knowledge through interaction with others, such as the instruction of a teacher or reciprocal teaching from a peer. The second level, the individual's mental structure would include repeated exposure to words being introduced and opportunity for student created word meanings, where each student could use their own understanding to extend their learning beyond the interaction with others.

The observation data also showed that teachers read aloud to begin each of their literacy lessons 20 days out of the 20 days data was collected. Rich and explicit vocabulary instruction was observed 16 days out of the 20 days data was collected. Instruction using pre-selected words was observed 11 out of 20 days observed, as was repeated exposure to vocabulary words being introduced. Instructional time was focused on vocabulary (either directly or indirectly) 15 out of 20 days observed, and teachers incorporated opportunities for student created meanings 13 out of 20 days observed. Overall, read aloud, rich/explicit instruction, instructional time focused on vocabulary, and student created meanings were observed 'a lot', defined as being observed 12 or more times out of 20 observations, while instruction using pre-selected words and repeated exposure to vocabulary words being introduced was observed a little, defined as being observed eight to 11 times out of 20 observations. Figure 16 presents all four teachers' observed vocabulary instructional scores on the *Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction* tool by effective vocabulary instructional practice

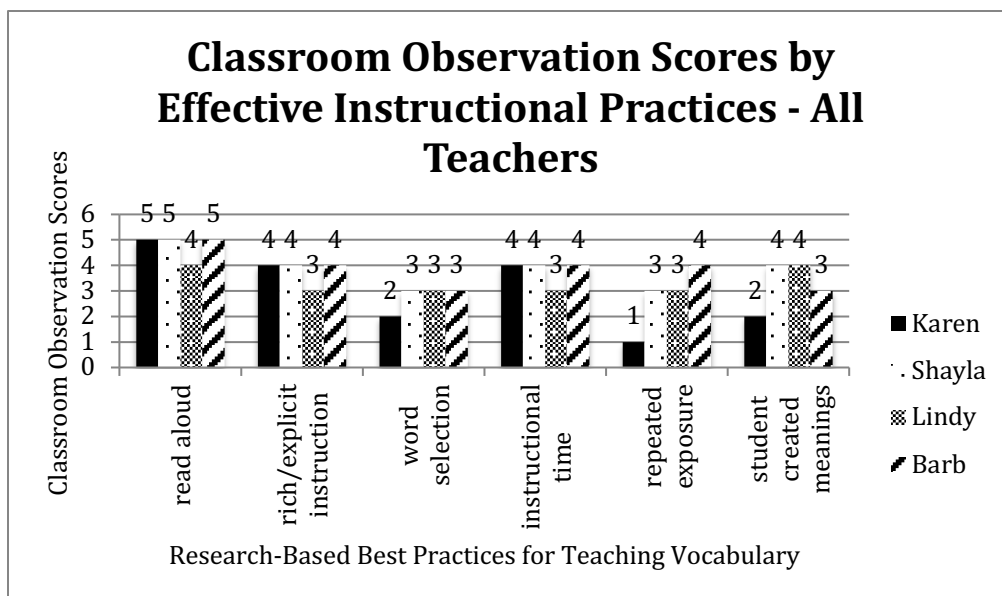


Figure 16. Classroom Observation Scores by Effective Vocabulary Instructional Practices for all teachers.

Implications

This study has potential implications for policy and practice related to vocabulary instruction for all students and, specifically, students from low-income homes. That is, teachers need to participate in professional learning opportunities regarding the CCSS in general, and vocabulary instruction in particular. Additionally, this study has implications for teacher preparation programs and a heightened focus on vocabulary instruction.

Vocabulary knowledge is important to reading comprehension and academic success. Teachers' awareness of its importance has been refocused and revitalized due to the vocabulary standards in the CCSS. To build on teachers' renewed interest in vocabulary instruction, particularly for young children considered "at risk" for academic success, it is important to understand what is taking place in schools serving students from high poverty communities. By

understanding teachers' beliefs and practices it will be possible to deliver more effective professional development on vocabulary instruction. While SES status plays a role in vocabulary acquisition, vocabulary instruction is important for all emergent readers regardless of background. However, participants in this study stated that they lack confidence in their knowledge of vocabulary strategies, and are lacking direction on how to incorporate vocabulary strategies into district curriculum. Consequently, additional opportunities are needed to help educators become more knowledgeable about vocabulary instructional strategies and how to incorporate these strategies into district mandated reading curriculum.

Based on the data, the following suggestions are provided.

1. Teacher should be provided further direction on how to incorporate vocabulary strategies into their reading instruction, specifically when vocabulary is not the key focus, through professional development at the school and district level.
2. Teachers should include opportunities from the beginning for students to extract meaning from their reading through known words, as well as words they are learning, to support their early reading successes.
3. Teachers should incorporate new knowledge and practice with familiar books for rereading during authentic reading opportunities. This will further students' vocabulary knowledge through word repetition and increased instructional time.
4. Teachers should incorporate knowledge of vocabulary strategies into other subject areas to provide additional practice opportunities for students to learn unfamiliar words.

Suggestions for Future Research

Holding beliefs that vocabulary is an important component of literacy instruction is necessary, but not sufficient, for increasing student vocabulary knowledge and ultimately student reading proficiency scores. Consequently, more research is needed to understand why some teachers are better equipped to provide high-quality vocabulary instruction throughout their instruction than are other teachers. This is not to say that other instructional areas and subjects should be pushed aside, but rather provide more research on what can be done to make vocabulary instruction a catalyst for student reading proficiency, and ultimately a non-negotiable piece of literacy instruction for teachers.

Likewise, even when teachers do see vocabulary as an important component of literacy instruction, they are not always making time throughout their lesson for rich and explicit instruction. Thus, research is needed to understand how districts might more actively encourage their teachers to engage in vocabulary instruction without making it one more thing teachers are expected to do, or an issue of contention.

Third, research is needed to understand the level of vocabulary instruction occurring in today's elementary classrooms. Finally, further research on the impact of professional development and intervention strategies in early elementary classrooms is necessary. A closer look at what skills and strategies are used for interventions and the achievement level of students' reading proficiency are important. As the National Reading Panel (2000) concluded, "The studies reviewed suggest that vocabulary instruction does lead to gains in comprehension, but that the methods must be appropriate to the age and ability of the reader" (p. 4-26). Understanding this, could lead to suggestions that support teachers' knowledge of vocabulary strategies and the goal of increasing overall student reading proficiency. Likewise, it is important to continue to learn how SES status might influence the overall vocabulary knowledge students

have as they enter school (Coyne, Capozzoli-Oldham, & Simmons, 2012; Cromley & Azvedo, 2007; Lesaux & Kieffer, 2010; Stahl & Nagy, 2006).

Limitations of the Study

This study has three limitations. First, this is the first year of implementation for both the districts' reading & math curriculum. This may have influenced the teachers' instructional level and the teachers may have been more focused on teaching to fidelity during this school year than if the curriculum was older and more familiar to them.

Second, social desirability may have influenced the results of the study. That is, participants may have recognized that I value vocabulary instruction and may have, in some instances, provided responses that they believed were socially acceptable. Cross-referencing or triangulation of data was used to look for consistency and inconsistency of responses.

Third, the study was conducted over only part of the school year. A longer study with more in-depth of data collection could provide more information to better understand why teachers choose or choose not to prioritize vocabulary instruction.

Final Thoughts

Vocabulary knowledge is strongly related to students' reading comprehension, as well as their overall academic success (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013; Tabors, Snow, & Dickinson, 2001). Further, children's knowledge of vocabulary in primary grades predicts reading achievement levels in high school (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Tabors et al., 2001). That is, it is important to intervene in the early grades as research suggests the strong relation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension, is strengthened over time (Baumann & Kame'enui, 2004). While this study found that kindergarten and first grade teachers believe

vocabulary instruction is valuable, teachers were not consistently teaching all components of effective vocabulary instruction based on the research in Chapter 2. Teachers indicated that other subjects and deterrents limited their time to focus on vocabulary instruction. While teachers implement strategies and skills they find beneficial, it is nonetheless important to consider ways to increase teacher professional development to increase teachers' knowledge of vocabulary instructional strategies and how to incorporate those strategies into their instruction throughout the day.

As Flesch and Lass (1954) said, "You can't build up a vocabulary if you never meet any new words. And to meet them you must read. The more you read the better."

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Appendix A

IRB Approval



Date: September 4, 2018

TO: Haley Olson, (haleymarieolson@ku.edu)

FROM: Jocelyn Isley, MS, CIP, IRB Administrator (785-864-7385, irb@ku.edu)

RE: **Approval of Initial Study**

The IRB reviewed the submission referenced below on 9/4/2018. The IRB approved the protocol, effective 9/4/2018.

IRB Action: APPROVED	Effective date: 9/4/2018	Expiration Date : 9/3/2023
STUDY DETAILS		
Investigator:	Haley Olson	
IRB ID:	STUDY00142845	
Title of Study:	Engaging With Vocabulary: Understanding the Beliefs and Practices of First Grade Teachers Serving Students from Low Socioeconomic Backgrounds	
Funding ID:	None	
REVIEW INFORMATION		
Review Type:	Initial Study	
Review Date:	9/4/2018	
Documents Reviewed:	• Adult Consent Form, • Classroom Observation Form, • Human Research Protocol, • Recruitment Letter/Email, • Teacher Interview Questions, • Teacher Survey Questions	
Exemption Determination:	• (1) Educational settings • (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation	
Additional Information:		

KEY PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES. Consult our website for additional information.

1. **Approved Consent Form:** You must use the final, watermarked version of the consent form, available under the "Documents" tab, "Final" column, in eCompliance. Participants must be given a copy of the form.
2. **Continuing Review and Study Closure:** Continuing Review is not required for this study. Please [close your study](#) at completion.
3. **Modifications:** Modifications to the study may affect Exempt status and must be submitted for review and approval before implementing changes. For more information on the types of modifications that require IRB review and approval, [visit our website](#).
4. **Add Study Team Member:** [Complete a study team modification](#) if you need to add investigators not named in original application. Note that new investigators must take [the online tutorial](#) prior to being approved to work on the project.
5. **Data Security:** [University data security and handling requirements](#) apply to your project.
6. **Submit a Report of New Information (RNI):** If a subject is injured in the course of the research procedure or there is a breach of participant information, an RNI must be submitted immediately. Potential non-compliance may also be reported through the RNI process.
7. **Consent Records:** When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity.
8. **Study Records** must be kept a minimum of three years after the completion of the research. Funding agencies may have retention requirements that exceed three years.

Appendix B
TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – INITIAL INTERVIEW

Teacher Name _____

Years of Teaching Experience _____

Current Grade Level _____

Years at current grade level _____

Current School _____

Years at current school _____

Highest Degree Held _____

Part 1: Beliefs about Teaching

1. Describe your role as a teacher?
2. How do you decide what to teach and what not to teach?
3. How do you decide when to move on to a new topic in your classroom?
4. How do you maximize student learning in your classroom?

Part 2: Beliefs about Literacy

1. How would you define literacy
2. What are some things you value most about literacy?
3. How do students learn literacy best?
4. What literacy concepts do you think are most important for your students to understand by the end of the school year?
5. What vocabulary practices do you believe are effective?
6. What are the schools/district views of vocabulary instruction?

7. Are there any tensions between what you do and school/district expect or mandates?

8. How do you want your students to view literacy by the end of the school year?
9. Do you have any students that are English Language Learners in your classroom? If so, do you have strategies that you use to assist their needs?
10. How involved are your classroom parents in their child's learning? Do you provide any home-school connection with respect to vocabulary learning or instruction?

Appendix C

TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – POST-OBSERVATION INTERVIEW

Teacher Name _____

1. In general, what do you think about this vocabulary lesson?
2. What were your learning goals for this vocabulary lesson?
3. How did you select which vocabulary words to focus on during your lesson?
4. Did the students learn the vocabulary words you intended them to learn? How do you know?
5. What modifications to your original vocabulary lesson did you make (if any)? Why did you make those modifications?
6. If you had a chance to teach this same vocabulary lesson to the same group of students again, what would you do differently?
7. Is there anything else you would like me to know about this vocabulary lesson?

Appendix D

Classroom Observation: Improving Vocabulary Instruction (WestEd, 2018)

Part 2: Classroom Observation

Explicit Vocabulary Instruction (embedded in content lesson)	Observed	Not Observed	Notes for Discussion
Teacher provides explicit vocabulary strategies embedded into the content lesson.			
Teacher reviews words learned from previous lessons and a school wide list, if relevant to the lesson.			
Teacher provides a list of new words students will encounter in the text.			
Teacher introduces new words and explains the meanings of these words.			
Students are asked to share what they already know about the meanings of new words.			
Teacher builds on students' prior knowledge of word meanings.			
Teacher uses active and generative activities to embed and support vocabulary development during the content lesson (e.g., word sorts, games, word riddles, art/drawing, sentence challenges, etc.).			
Teacher uses informal opportunities as words arise during the lesson to explicitly teach word meaning.			

Practice Opportunities	Observed	Not Observed	Notes for Discussion
Repeated exposure to new words is provided during the lesson.			
Students encounter the new words and relevant previously learned words in multiple contexts, including oral and written activities.			
Teacher provides sufficient time during the lesson for students to practice new words.			
Practice is extended over time through the use of word walls or other activities/resources.			
Computer-based activities are used to provide students with extended practice, when appropriate.			
Practice is extended through homework assignments given at the end of the lesson.			
Teacher provides students with in-class time and opportunities for independent practice of newly learned vocabulary strategies.			
Scaffolding Student Strategies	Observed	Not Observed	Notes for Discussion
Teacher scaffolds students in developing strategies to make them independent vocabulary learners.			
Teacher models using context and word analysis cues as a strategy for determining word meaning.			

Teacher models strategies for using word structure and components (prefixes, suffixes) to derive the meaning of unfamiliar words.			
Reference materials such as computer software, textbook glossaries, & dictionary/thesaurus are available in the classroom.			

Assessment of Student Learning	Observed	Not Observed	Notes for Discussion
Teacher encourages students to demonstrate understanding of word meaning through a variety of oral and written activities embedded into the content lesson.			
Teacher regularly monitors student understanding by conducting frequent informal checks of individual and small group work throughout the lesson.			
Teacher uses formal written assessments to document student understanding.			

Appendix E

Adult Informed Consent

Understanding Teacher Beliefs' about Vocabulary and Their Instructional Practices

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Curriculum and Teaching at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Vocabulary knowledge is important for learning. Thus, I am conducting this study to learn about teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction and current instructional practices. By learning what works and about challenges teachers/students encounter, I will be better able to develop professional learning opportunities.

Thus, we are conducting this study to learn about teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction and their instructional practices.

PROCEDURES

If I agree to participate in this study, I will:

1. Video-record five vocabulary lessons over a month long unit. These recordings are required in order to participate in the study. I agree to audio/video record myself reading aloud to my students with equipment loaned to me by the researcher.
2. Participate in two informal video-recorded interviews (one at the beginning of the study, and one after I teach) so that I may reflectively share my thoughts and beliefs with respect to vocabulary instruction. The interviews will take approximately 30 minutes. Participants may discontinue the interview at any time.

RISKS

I understand that this method of data collection is not expected to interfere with my teaching. No risks are anticipated for participating in this study. Participant employment will not be affected by participation in this study.

BENEFITS

Participating in this study may help me to think about my teaching practices. I may contact the researcher to request information about the findings of this study.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

My name will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about me or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher(s) will use a study number or a pseudonym rather than my name. My identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) I give written permission.

Only the researcher and her research team will have access to this data. The recordings and all other data will be stored on the researcher's password protected iPad. Permission granted on this date remains in effect for five years after the conclusion of the study and then all data from the study will be destroyed. By signing this form I give permission for the use and disclosure of my information for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

INSTITUTIONAL DISCLAIMER STATEMENT

In the event of injury, the Kansas Tort Claims Act provides for compensation if it can be demonstrated that the injury was caused by the negligent or wrongful act or omission of a state employee acting within the scope of his/her employment.

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

I am not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and I may refuse to do so without affecting my right to any services I am receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if I refuse to sign, I cannot participate in this study.

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

I may withdraw my consent to participate in this study at any time. I also have the right to cancel my permission to use and disclose further information collected about me, in writing, at any time, by sending my written request to: Haley Olson, 3310 NW 42nd Ter., Topeka, KS 66618, or via e-mail at: haleymarieolson@gmail.com.

If I cancel permission to use my information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about me. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received my cancellation, as described above.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher listed at the end of this consent form.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email irb@ku.edu.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

Type/Print Participant's Name

Date

Participant's Signature

Researcher Contact Information:

Haley Olson, PhD Candidate

Principal Investigator

Joseph R. Pearson Hall

1122 W. Campus Rd.

University of Kansas

Lawrence, KS 66045

haleymarieolson@gmail.com

Appendix F

Timeline of Data Collection

November 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	Collect First Teacher Interviews-Site 1	No School	No School	No School		
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
	No School	No School	Site 1 Class 1 Observation 1	Collect Post- Observation Interview 1	Site 1 Class 1 Observation 2	

December 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
2	3 Collect Post-Observation Interview 2	4 Site 1 Class 2 Observation 1	5	6 Site 1 Class 1 Observation 3	7 Collect Post-Observation Interview 1	8
9	10 Collect Post-Observation Interview 3	11 Site 1 Class 2 Observation 2	12 Site 1 Class 1 Observation 4	13 Collect Post-Observation Interview 2	14 Collect Post-Observation Interview 4	15
16	17 Site 1 Class 2 Observation 3	18 Site 1 Class 1 Observation 5	19 Collect Post-Observation Interview 3	20 Collect Post-Observation Interview 5	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
	No School - Winter Break					
30	31	Notes				
	No School					

January 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
	No School					
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	No School		Site 1 Class 2 Observation 4		Collect Post- Observation Interview 4	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	Site 1 Class 2 Observation 5	Collect Post- Observation Interview 5	Collect First Teacher Interviews-Site 2		Site 2 Class 1 Observation 1	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	No School	Site 2 Class 2 Observation 1	No School	Collect Post- Observation Interview 1	Site 2 Class 1 Observation 2	
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
	Collect Post- Observation Interview 1	Collect Post- Observation Interview 2	No School	Site 2 Class 1 Observation 3		

February 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	31	1 Site 2 Class 2 Observation 2	2
3	4 Collect Post- Observation Interview 3	5 Collect Post- Observation Interview 2	6	7 No School	8 No School	9
10	11 Site 2 Class 1 Observation 4	12 Site 2 Class 2 Observation 3	13 Collect Post- Observation Interview 3	14	15 Collect Post- Observation Interview 4	16
17	18 Site 2 Class 2 Observation 4	19	20 Collect Post- Observation Interview 4	21 No School - PTC	22 No School	23
24	25 Site 2 Class 1 Observation 5	26 Collect Post- Observation Interview 5	27 Site 2 Class 2 Observation 5	28 Collect Post- Observation Interview 5	1	2

Appendix G

Themes, Meanings, and Examples derived from Teacher Data

Theme	Meaning	Examples
Responsibility for student achievement	Teachers believe they are responsible for student literacy proficiency levels, including vocabulary knowledge	<p style="text-align: center;">Shayla:</p> <p><i>My job is to teach students skills they need to be successful. This includes all the skills needed for them to be proficient readers, like vocabulary, phonics, and phonemic awareness.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Lindy:</p> <p><i>I ultimately want all of my students reading at a J or higher by the time they leave my class. If I don't get them reading, I am setting them up for failure down the line.</i></p>
Vocabulary knowledge and student reading proficiency	Teachers believe proficient vocabulary knowledge leads to overall proficient reading levels	<p style="text-align: center;">Karen:</p> <p><i>Especially in students' early years of education vocabulary goes hand in hand with reading proficiency. Connecting vocabulary words to things they already know in their day to day lives builds reading comprehension skills.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Shayla:</p> <p><i>Phonological awareness skills, concepts of print, and vocabulary are all essential skills that move students towards reading proficiently.</i></p>
Competing district expectations deter from vocabulary instruction	Teachers desire to teach with a focus more on vocabulary in multiple subjects, but lack time due	<p style="text-align: center;">Karen:</p> <p><i>Currently, the school and district has not set high expectations for vocabulary or literacy altogether.</i></p>

	to district expectations and mandated instructional minutes in subjects.	<p>Lindy: <i>More of the curriculum we use has parts of the lesson that focus on the vocabulary, but I feel it is a quick here is the word and what it means. I've never really felt like I know how long or how much I'm supposed to focus on vocabulary and I run out of minutes in the day.</i></p>
Additional district input on vocabulary instruction	Teachers desire additional district input on vocabulary instruction	<p>Lindy: <i>I try to follow the district guidelines and expectations, but I usually try and go further by making real-world connections. I would love to learn more strategies for how to incorporate vocabulary into additional subjects.</i></p>
Success in reading via vocabulary instruction	Teachers would like to see additional reading proficiency through utilizing additional vocabulary strategies.	<p>Karen: <i>It is on our grade card for our students to be able to figure out unknown words through context, so I feel it is essential that we have a higher focus on vocabulary which will ultimately lead to higher reading success.</i></p> <p>Lindy: <i>Sometimes I have to do more than what I'm given to help students really gain an understanding of the words. I would love more direction on this during PD (professional development).</i></p>
Vocabulary isn't a district focus	Teachers view vocabulary instruction as beneficial but question whether the	<p>Karen: <i>We have a very high math focus this year and literacy</i></p>

	district holds the same views	<p><i>and reading have been pushed to the back.</i></p> <p>Barb:</p> <p><i>I don't feel like there is tension between what the teachers think they should be teaching and what the district feels should be done exactly, I just think there is a lot of room to grow, both for the teachers and the district as a whole in my opinion.</i></p>
Additional teacher development on vocabulary strategies	Teachers desire additional teacher development on vocabulary strategies they can utilize with primary students.	<p>Barb:</p> <p><i>Vocabulary instruction is an area where I would like to grow, honestly.</i></p> <p>Shayla:</p> <p><i>I have never been exposed to formal strategies for vocabulary instruction in my grade level beyond our teacher's manuals.</i></p>
Additional teacher development utilizing research on vocabulary instruction	Teachers desire to learn more about academic research on vocabulary instruction.	<p>Barb:</p> <p><i>I'm very interested in reading research and would like to know more about what the best strategies are for teaching vocabulary in the classroom. I feel like that's an area where I need to grow.</i></p>