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How the timing of explicit vocabulary instruction impacts listening comprehension in young English language learners

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How the Timing of Explicit Vocabulary Instruction Impacts Listening Comprehension

in Young English Language Learners

by

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Abstract

Many second language learners struggle to understand and comprehend the spoken language. The amount of known vocabulary and the depth of understanding of known vocabulary can have an impact on listening comprehension. The focus of this study was the timing of explicit vocabulary instruction and the impact it has on listening comprehension of second language learners. The participants of this study were 24 elementary school age students studying English as a second language. Students had various home languages and levels of English proficiency. Each participant took part in 2 experimental conditions and 1 controlled condition. Each of these conditions altered the timing of vocabulary instruction. Condition 1 received explicit vocabulary instruction of target vocabulary before listening to a text. After the listening task, students completed a multiple-choice assessment that reflected their comprehension of the listening task. Condition 2 received vocabulary instruction after listening to a text. Once the listening task was complete, students took a multiple-choice assessment that reflected their comprehension of the listening task. Condition 3, or the control condition, received no vocabulary instruction before listening to a text and completing the assessment. However, target vocabulary was taught after the assessment was given to ensure students still received instruction on the target vocabulary. This study used a within-subjects design which eliminated the order effect. The results show no significant difference between vocabulary instruction that takes place before listening to a text and vocabulary instruction that takes place after listening to a text. However, the results of this study show a significant difference between vocabulary instruction and no vocabulary instruction at all. This indicates that teaching vocabulary, regardless of the timing, enhances student listening comprehension more than not explicitly teaching vocabulary at all. Based on the results of this study, teachers should explicitly teach vocabulary, in general, because it enhances listening comprehension in English language learners.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the majority of classroom settings, students are expected to do ample amounts of listening related tasks. For students learning English, these listening tasks may be difficult to perform. When it comes to comprehending spoken language, many trying factors may stand in the way of their comprehension. By teaching vocabulary, we as educators, are enhancing student opportunity for successful listening comprehension. If vocabulary instruction is missing from learning, listening assessments become misleading on individual listening abilities and it is possible that L2 learners will not comprehend spoken language as successfully.

The goal of this study was to collect data on when vocabulary instruction proves to be most effective on listening comprehension. The specific research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. Does teaching unknown vocabulary prior to a listening task enhance student listening comprehension?

2. Does teaching unknown vocabulary following a listening task enhance student listening comprehension?

To test these questions, L2 students participated in a series of tasks that target their listening comprehension. This assisted in identifying the most effective timing for explicit vocabulary instruction. Students answered comprehension questions that reflect appropriate grade level and ability level text. All assessments were proctored in a small group setting. There were three different testing conditions. The first condition explicitly taught vocabulary prior to the listening comprehension activity. Once the activity had concluded, the listening comprehension assessment was administered. The second condition explicitly taught the

vocabulary after the listening activity had taken place. After the listening activity was completed and the vocabulary had been taught, the students took a listening comprehension assessment. The third condition removed all vocabulary instruction. The listening comprehension activity and assessment was performed by the students. Once the assessment was completed, the students were explicitly taught the target vocabulary, to ensure learning opportunities were not being neglected. By changing the timing of explicit vocabulary instruction or eliminating vocabulary instruction, the study should show the most ideal timing for effective vocabulary instruction to support listening comprehension.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this section, I discuss the various processes and abilities L2 learners must possess in order to fully comprehended the spoken language. Listening skills and vocabulary knowledge are two major factors one must consider when building listening comprehension. Making connections between these factors and then building upon them can provide an experience that enables L2 learners to be successful in listening comprehension.

The Act of Listening

In order to make a link between listening comprehension and vocabulary, we first need to address listening comprehension in general. Vandergrift and Baker (2015) define listening comprehension as "the ability to 1) process extended examples of realistic spoken language, automatically and in real time; 2) understand the linguistic information that is unequivocally included in the text; and, 3) make whatever inferences are unambiguously implicated by the content of the passage" (Vandergrift & Baker, 2015, pp. 392). Many variables contribute to listening comprehension making the act of listening very difficult. According to Vandergrift and Baker (2015),

> listeners must apply phonological knowledge to the comprehension process to segment the sound stream (often indistinct) into meaningful units and process them quickly. Given that listeners have neither the luxury of reviewing information heard nor spaces between the words in a message, they have to hold more information in working memory. (p. 392)

Vandergrift and Baker (2015), mention the use of top down and bottom up approaches by listeners. These approaches, especially the top down approach, have listeners making inferences and connections based on the words and phrases they are hearing. Listening

comprehension proves to be a difficult task because the listener has limited control over the speed of input. Sounds and words in spoken language also include factors such as stress and intonation, which can be informative, leaving the listener one more input types to decipher. Vandergrift and Baker (2015) believe these factors add to the complexity of listening.

Vandergrift and Baker (2015) pointed out, individuals may use various amounts of processes to accomplish listening in any given situation. In listening, individuals use the top down and bottom up processes. The bottom up approach focuses on language learning, or in this case listening comprehension, that builds on the basic blocks of language. Individuals first understand spoken words, then more complex spoken structures, then finally understanding meaning of the spoken language.

In contrast to bottom up, top down process is the focus of overall meaning of the spoken language, rather than the smaller constructs (Vandergrift, 2007). In listening, individuals may use both processes simultaneously to comprehend spoken language. Vandergrift (2004) points out that "L2 listeners need to learn how to use both processes to their advantage, depending on their purpose for listening" (p. 4). The speed and effectiveness in which an individual can use these processes directly relates to the individual's ability to efficiently process what is being heard. Individual's ability to comprehend the spoken language directly affects the rate and adequacy of the top down and bottom up process (Vandergrift, 2004, p. 4). Since beginning L2 listeners are not as automatic in their processing as L1 listeners, L2 listeners consciously focus on every detail of what they hear. The act of listening in one's second language is not as natural as it would be in their first language. Therefore, L2 listeners must consciously focus on all the details they hear to comprehend what is being heard. With this lack of automaticity in processing, "comprehension breaks down or listeners may use

compensatory strategies, contextual factors, and other relevant information available to them to guess what was not understood" (Vandergrift, 2004, pp. 4-5).

As previously mentioned, the act of listening is quite complex. Multiple cognitive processes are used to create purpose for listening and understanding. These factors directly connect to the intake of spoken vocabulary. When L2 listeners are provided the opportunity to use various methods to comprehend the spoken language, the listener has a better chance of understanding. Linda Jones (2009) conducted a multimedia-based listening comprehension study that focused on the written and pictorial annotations. The study was concurrently investigating the effects of student's verbal and spatial abilities on listening comprehension and new vocabulary acquisition. Jones lead her study with two hypotheses

1) An interaction is expected between the annotation types available and the verbal and spatial abilities of students. Students who receive information in a format related to their cognitive strength will recall more prepositions of the listening passage than those who listen to the passage using information for which they are not cognitively prepared 2) An interaction is expected between the annotation types available and the verbal and spatial abilities of students. Participants who receive information in a format related to their cognitive strength will recall more vocabulary items from the listening passage than who listen to the passage using information for which they are not cognitively prepared. (pp. 271-272)

Jones selected 171 first year, second semester English speaking students of French vocabulary. All vocabulary was presented orally to each participant. All students were administered a 25-question vocabulary recognition pretest to determine known and unknown words. The results of the pretest concluded that all students had low prior knowledge of the target vocabulary.

Along with a vocabulary pretest, students were administered verbal and spatial ability tests

from the Kit of Factor Referenced Cognitive Tests (Ekstrom, French, & Harman, 1976, as cited

by Jones, 2009). The results in regard to the first question show that both learners with high

and low spatial ability were able to comprehend the spoken material and make connections

with the pictorial representation in the "immediate recall protocol posttest" (Jones, 2009).

However, the "delayed recall protocol posttest" (p. 283) revealed the high spatial ability

participants outperformed the low spatial ability participants when given just the pictorial

representation. Meanwhile, the low spatial ability participants were more successful when both

pictorial and written accommodations were involved. As far as verbal ability, participants with

high abilities outperformed those with low verbal abilities when presented with only pictorial

representation, as well, as both pictorial and written accommodations. However, when both

groups of participants were not provided any pictorial annotations, both groups performed

similarly. As for the results to the second question, participants with both high and low spatial

abilities performed similarly with little discrepancies. However, participants in both groups

showed higher achievement when they had the ability to use any of the annotations. Those who

were not provided with any annotations were outperformed. As far as the verbal ability

students, those is the high verbal ability group were more successful in both the "immediate"

and "delayed" (p. 284) posttests than the low verbal ability group. This study shows that

language and vocabulary acquisition will be more likely if the learners are presented

information in meaningful ways that provide opportunities for processing and understanding. If

L2 students are provided learning situations that allow them to familiarize themselves with the

vocabulary and activate background knowledge their understanding of a text will be increased

because learning has now become meaningful. When there is a motive behind listening, L2 learners will be more successful in oral comprehension and recall.

Insights to Listening Comprehension

Very often students are confronted with listening situations that make processing and comprehension difficult. Students learning a second language are not only expected to understand the spoken language, but also expected to perform tasks that apply their listening ability. Educators are often assessing and dissecting student performances through listening tests and activities. According to Chang and Read, (2006), L2 students experience high levels of stress during assessments and activities. By not having a visual aid or prior knowledge of the topics being discussed, students will often become stressed, therefore, the potential of performing lower than their listening capability is very likely. In an effort to support L2 learners' listening comprehension, students can partake in pre-listening activities (Chang & Read, 2006). To support this theory, Berne (1995) conducted a study that focused on three questions, all focused on pre-listening activities,

> 1) Does the listening comprehension performance of foreign language learners vary as a function of pre-listening activity? 2) Does the listening comprehension performance of foreign language learners vary as a function of multiple exposures to the listening passage? 3) Does the relative effectiveness of different pre-listening activities vary as a function of multiple exposures to listening passage? (pp. 318-319)

To answer these questions, Berne selected 62 Spanish learners at the university level. All subjects were native English speakers enrolled in the third section of a four-section language course. Participants were in their third section of a four-section language course and were native English speakers. The foundations of this course were comprehension based. The pre-

listening activities provided in this study mainly focused on vocabulary and unknown phrases. Berne meticulously chose words and phrases that met the requirements "First, the word or expression had to be important to the overall comprehension of the passage and secondly, the word or expression had to be unfamiliar to the subjects" (Berne, 1995, p. 321). The pre-listening activities consisted of 10 words or phrases taken from the passage, which were then paired with the English equivalent. For each pre-listening the subjects were given 10 words or phrases found in the passage, alongside these words and phrases were the English counterparts. To provide context to the unknown words or phrases, the sentence or passage of the target vocabulary was also provided to the subjects. All participants received a packet that contained written instructions, pre-listening activity, a comprehension assessment and paper intended for the written comprehension "recall" (Berne, 1995, p. 321). The findings to the first questions of this study, "Does the listening comprehension performance of foreign language vary as a function of pre-listening activity?" (pp. 318-319), show significant improvements in comprehension when the subjects were able to preview the questions that were on the comprehension test. These students were able to preview the questions and possible answers prior to the activity. However, the same cannot be said about pre-listening activities with a vocabulary focus. Berne (1995) discovered little improvement occurred when prior vocabulary instruction took place. Berne believes there were several factors that should be considered for these failed results. According to Berne, many factors should be considered for the lack of success in the vocabulary instruction. The factors that may have caused the vocabulary results to fail consisted of the presentation of unknown words, lack of background knowledge with unknown words, word choice by the researcher, organization of the study itself, and learners emphasized their focus on individual vocabulary words rather than the passage as a whole.

Aside from the failed vocabulary results, Berne (1995) concluded that previewing questions prior to a listening comprehension task "allows the learners to see what information they will be responsible for, which then allows them to focus their attention on the appropriate portions of the passage" (p. 324). The results of the second research question, "2) Does the listening comprehension performance of foreign language learners vary as a function of multiple exposures to the listening passage?" (pp. 318-319), showed L2 learners improved drastically with more exposures to the target material. Berne (1995) suggests "It is possible that upon viewing the passage a second time, subjects who completed the vocabulary preview activity were able to shift their attention into the passage content, thereby allowing them to overcome the negative effects of being distracted by focusing on vocabulary items when viewing the passage, the first time." Subjects seemed to be more comfortable with the vocabulary, therefore, allowing themselves to focus more on the overall meaning of the passage, rather than individual vocabulary words.

The results of the third research question, "3) Does the relative effectiveness of different pre-listening activities vary as a function of multiple exposures to listening passage?" (pp. 318-319) suggest that any relationship between the pre-listening activity and multiple exposures is insignificant. Since these interactions were insignificant, the effects of multiple exposures to the passage were equal among the three groups.

Allowing students insight to the assessed content not only takes the pressure off of the students, but also gives them a chance to focus their attention on a specific area in the passage or conversation. With this specific focus in mind, students are not thrown into a listening task, but rather, are provided guidance and assistance to better prepare them. This will allow the

student to be able to sift through unneeded information, which in turn, adds purpose to their listening.

Chang and Read (2006) believe that teachers are able to help students focus on listening through various pre-teaching activities, "pre-teaching vocabulary and sentence structures, previewing questions, pre-listening to relevant topics, and pre-discussing relevant topics" (p. 376). By providing ample amounts of pre-listening activities, students will learn to identify specific details in their listening rather than listening without purpose. When these skills are strengthened, students will then be able to transfer their listening comprehension skills to higher order thinking and conversational situations. To solidify this, they ran a study that asked the following questions: "Will different types of listening support affect learners' listening performance differently? Will the effect of each form of listening support be the same for learners at two levels of L2 listening proficiency?" (pp. 377-378). The study took place at a college in Taiwan. All 160 participants were studying business. On average, each student had been studying English for a total of 7 years. Even though these students have had much practice with the L2, they had little experience in speaking English outside the classroom setting. Participants were exposed to four different types of listening support: test question previewing, repetition of input, building background knowledge of the topic, and vocabulary instruction. All individuals listened to two different scripts and were given a 15-question, multiple-choice, posttest that focused on main idea and specific details of the oral scripts. The results of the study show differences among the various types of listening support. The students showed the greatest achievement overall with topic preview, followed by repetition of input and then preview of the questions. The lowest achieving listening support was vocabulary. Even though vocabulary was not as successful, many subjects enjoyed the vocabulary

instruction. Through interviews, many participants claimed the vocabulary instruction boosted their confidence before taking the assessment.

Studies give insight to various types of information. Chang and Read (2006) discovered the data they collected showed areas of great achievement, but also gave a look into how students feel while acquiring new vocabulary. Participants discussed how the increase in their confidence level and their enjoyment of the vocabulary instruction. With this in mind, it is important to note that language learners are directly impacted by spoken language. In order to actively participate in conversation or perform tasks, language learners are required to listen once, comprehend, and then respond. In an academic setting, strong listening skills are crucial when it comes to comprehending tasks and classroom expectations. Listening comprehension is a skill that can be taught and practiced if done in a way that is meaningful for students. Students who engage in meaningful and effective listening during class will perform better academically. Chang (2007) performed a study on a group of 117 Taiwanese college students, ranging in age from 18-24. The questions leading this study targeted the lengths of vocabulary preparation and the impact it made on listening comprehension, student confidence, and strategy usage. The guiding questions are,

> Do varying lengths of preparation time make a difference to learners' performance in vocabulary knowledge or overall listening comprehension? Do different lengths of preparation time make a difference to learners' confidence? If yes, which results in a higher level of confidence? and, do different lengths of preparation time make a difference to learners' strategy use? (Chang, 2007, p. 536)

Experimental groups were made of participants who had similar listening comprehension skills determined by the TOEIC listening test. These groups were then segregated by more advanced

and less advanced listening levels. To test the theory of length preparation each group was given a different amount of time with the vocabulary list. Group A was allotted a week with the vocabulary list, Group B was given a day with the list, and finally, Group C was given 30 minutes with the vocabulary list. The study showed that vocabulary preparation did not greatly impact the participant's listening comprehension. However, vocabulary preparation did enhance student strategy usage and confidence, which in turn, gave students more drive and ambition to finish the task at hand. Chang (2007) believes that in a formal testing setting vocabulary preparation is impractical because the text is not familiar to the students. However, it is more practical to build vocabulary, not simply for listening comprehension alone, but for strategies and confidence.

All of these studies have given various results that support or go against listening activities to build comprehension. Whereas these findings are very important and influence the practices of educators, these results reflect just a small fragment of the language learning population. The research performed in each of these studies possesses 3 commonalities: situation, environment, and type of participant. All of the studies investigated in this section have been focused on adult language learners connected to a university. These learners are also foreign language learners, which creates an environment where the target language is predominantly spoken in classroom situations. Whereas, I acknowledge the importance and need for strong vocabulary instruction and listening activities, these studies do not support students learning English as a Second Language, nor do these studies reflect young learners. The study I intend to conduct will focus on English as a Second Language (ESL) learners at the primary level. This study is intended to provide insight on the optimal timing of vocabulary instruction to better enhance listening comprehension in young learners. All of these studies,

including my own, will have provided students with various ways to intake vocabulary and use this knowledge to better understand an oral passage. Primary level students have been chosen for this study because their motivation for learning and intake of information is much different than that of an adult. Even if adults do not have significant amounts of schooling, their life experiences assist with their motivation and need to learn another language. Young students in a primary school setting are given content-based vocabulary and concepts that need to be understood, therefore, giving little opportunity to use these new words in the real world. For this reason, discovering the best time to explicitly teach vocabulary and then reflect through listening comprehension is crucial to a young ESL student's education and language learning journey.

Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary knowledge has more depth than simply being able to filter out known and unknown words. Being able to recognize a spoken word is much different than being able to know and understand the meaning. There are two ways in which to identify the level of vocabulary a language learner possesses, the individual's vocabulary breadth and depth. According to Stenius Staehr (2009) "*Breadth* of vocabulary knowledge is defined as the size of a learner's vocabulary—that is, the number of words for which the learner has at least some knowledge of meaning" (p. 578). This area of vocabulary focuses on the individual's degree of lexical abilities and the size of their vocabulary. If a learner has a high level of vocabulary, naturally, the learner will be more proficient in the language, than those with smaller vocabularies. Feng Teng (2014) discovered when a learner has the knowledge of 5,000 or more-word families their listening comprehension is higher than those who know only 3,000-word families. This discovery was found through a study Teng conducted in 2014. The study

asked "What is the correlation between vocabulary size and listening comprehension of Chinese EFL students. and at what vocabulary threshold level would moderate performance be expected? Does the depth of vocabulary knowledge have a higher correlation than $r = 0.50$ with listening comprehension if a higher correlation than $r = 0.50$ exists between the breadth of vocabulary knowledge and listening comprehension? To what extent does the depth of vocabulary knowledge add to the prediction of listening comprehension, over and above the prediction provided by the breadth of vocabulary knowledge?" (2014, p. 36). All 88 participants were native to the Guangxi Region of China. Participants were native Chinese speakers ranging in ages of 19-21. This group of participants consisted of 68 females and 20 males. All students were given a Vocabulary Knowledge Test (VKT), Vocabulary Size Test (VST), and a listening comprehension test. As mentioned before, the results of the study show a higher level of comprehension in students with the knowledge of 5,000-word families. The study also shows that students who possess 3,000-word families do not have enough language to support strong listening comprehension. Teng (2014) explains the difference of 5,000- and 3,000-word families by suggesting that "listening comprehension requires a more advanced semantic processing ability with either familiar or unfamiliar words" (p. 49). If the basis of listening comprehension depends on the breadth of vocabulary, it is extremely important that educators focus their attention on vocabulary instruction and help develop listening comprehension by increasing vocabulary size. Educators need to provide ample opportunities for learners to practice specific activities that increase the skill of listening comprehension develop ways to identify meaning of unfamiliar words. Based on the results of the study, Teng (2014) believes that vocabulary instruction is important, and students should be given more opportunities to work on the meaning of unknown words. Practice in "word consciousness,

identifying morphological and semantic interconnectedness between words, and enhancing

learners' sensitivity to words with multiple meanings" (Teng, 2014, p. 49) will provide

opportunities for learners to broaden their vocabulary and increase their success in listening

comprehension.

Depth is the second consideration when discussing individual vocabularies. Simply

stated, depth focuses the quality of known words and how well these words are organized in

ones, unlike breadth, which focuses on quantity of known words. According to Stenius Staehr

(2009), depth "reflects how well a learner knows individual words or how well words are

organized in the learner's mental lexicon" (p. 558). Depth of vocabulary can be interpreted

through a few different approaches. The approach most connected to my study is the idea that

"depth conceptualizes the construct as the degree to which words are integrated into the

learner's mental lexicon and reflects the learner's ability to link the word to other related

words" (Stenius Staehr, 2009, p. 577). In my study, students will be explicitly working with

unknown vocabulary words. Once these words have been practiced, the ability to integrate and

connect their knowledge of the new vocabulary to previously known vocabulary will help

strengthen their listening comprehension. Also, the practice of unknown vocabulary will reflect

their knowledge on previously known words that relate or are connected to the new

vocabulary. Students will practice the vocabulary then apply their ability to make connections

through listening comprehension tasks. These tasks will reflect the depth of vocabulary on the

newly learned words. Level of depth will be determined on how well the individuals of the

study comprehend the oral reading.

It is clear that vocabulary knowledge is a complicated matter when discussing

individual levels. In order to get a true perspective on a learner's personal vocabulary level it is

important to consider both breadth and depth of the individual's vocabulary. Learners have several opportunities to add new words to their vocabularies numerous times a day. However, it is how they are stored in their mental lexicon that provides the level of vocabulary breadth or depth. This study provided students with new vocabulary exposures and opportunities to connect the newly learned words to previously known vocabulary. The intention would be that students make the connection between known and unknown words, which in turn, would assist in building on the depth and breadth of their vocabulary.

Connection between Vocabulary and Listening

Even though language learners will develop a sense of meaning and usage of unknown words through various social and academic situations, vocabulary is often explicitly taught in classroom settings. When vocabulary is explicitly taught, especially to lower level learners, it is suggested that learning is more effective and efficient. Educators need to introduce vocabulary in a way that is meaningful and authentic to the learner. Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013) claim "that providing word-meaning information is only a first step in building word knowledge. Just providing information even rich, meaningful explanations-will not result in deep or sustained knowledge of a word" (p. 32). Beck et al. based their 2002 theory off of a study performed by Margaret McKeown in 1993. This study (McKeown, 1993) investigated the use of dictionary definitions or revised definitions of words and why word learners struggle. Dictionary definitions are the explanations of words provided from a dictionary, whereas, revised definitions are words explained in age appropriate and student friendly terms. This study was made up of two different tasks, both comparing the effectiveness of definitions. The group of participants was a diverse group of 5th graders from two urban public schools. All students are from a middle socio-economic status background. The first task had 24 fifth

graders, each given a set of L2 words. The words were split into groups of six, one group containing dictionary definitions, the other group with revised definitions. Students were then asked to write each word in a sentence. Results showed that sentences with words defined by the dictionary were 25% "acceptable" (McKeown, 1993, p. 16) and 75% "unacceptable" (McKeown, 1993, p. 16), whereas, sentences with words that were defined with revised definitions resulted in 50% "acceptable" (McKeown, 1993, p. 16) sentences and 50% "unacceptable" (McKeown, 1993, p. 16) sentences. In the second section of this study, students were required to answer questions about the words provided. All students received a packet "in which each page contained a word, definition, question, and space to write their answers" (McKeown, 1993, p. 25). Each word was presented on separate pages. The students were focusing on 6 different words. Among this group of words, three were defined with a dictionary definition and three were defined with a revised definition. Results showed significantly higher achievement in responses that were connected to the revised definitions, thus, supporting the idea that revised definitions are more effective when teaching vocabulary over dictionary definitions.

This information directly supports the study I will be performing. McKeown found revised definitions to be a more effective because they explained terms that make most sense, cognitively, for the students. I believe defining words in terms that support my students' language proficiency will enhance their understanding of unknown vocabulary. McKeown chose a racially diverse group of students, which shows this strategy can be effective among students with varied cultural and language backgrounds. Participants in my study will vary by race and language, therefore, a revised definition of words may give all participants a fair opportunity to learn the unknown vocabulary.

This directly connects to the listening comprehension section above. If students experience vocabulary in a meaningful way, they are more likely to make connections, similar to meaningful listening opportunities. If these connections are made, students can hold these connections in their working memory to help trigger the meaning of words they are hearing. When this occurs, it can be assumed, that individuals listening comprehension will increase due to the meaningful experience they had with the vocabulary word. Kelly (1991), states, "instead of attributing the learner's listening comprehension difficulties to an auditory or perceptual deficiency... the main effort on the part of the learner and the teacher at this stage must be on lexical expansion" (conclusion, para. 1). With this statement alone, it is clear to see that individuals will comprehend more if they know the meaning of the majority of the words they are hearing. Without having a functioning knowledge of the word definition, it is difficult for individuals to understand what is being heard. From this, it can be assumed that students should be taught or exposed to unknown vocabulary words in order to understand the passage they are hearing.

Conclusion

Listening comprehension is very important if an individual desires high functionality in their L2. Educators must provide opportunities to allow students to practice listening through explicit instruction. Individuals gain meaning of unknown words through experience and exposure. The research discussed in this section supports the research study I will be conducting. Based on the research in this section, it is crucial that I provide ample amounts of effective learning opportunities that will provide authentic results that support the need for vocabulary instruction, as well as, the explicit timing of the instruction. This information will support what Teng has concluded, efficient vocabulary knowledge will further enhance

listening comprehension. Many researchers have found that explicit vocabulary instruction has not necessarily advanced learner comprehension. However, through my research I have discovered a gap in data collection. Most studies have been performed on adults in an English as a Foreign language setting, therefore, little has been discovered about primary aged students or primary ages students in an English as a Second Language setting. As a result of this gap, little insight has been provided on the listening comprehension of primary students. The data I intend to collect data will be based on primary age students in an English as a Second Language setting. This study will provide information not only on the timing of explicit vocabulary instruction but also target younger learners in a different type of language setting. Discoveries still need to be made on the optimal time to introduce and teach unknown vocabulary. The delivery of vocabulary will be influenced by the McKeown's findings of revised definitions. Students will be provided revised definitions when being introduced to new vocabulary. This study will help determine when to teach vocabulary to optimal listening comprehension in English as a Second Language (ESL) students. With this knowledge, I will be able to provide efficient and effective learning opportunities for my primary students.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Questions

The leading questions guiding this research are:

1) does teaching unknown vocabulary prior to a listening task enhance student listening comprehension?

2) does teaching unknown vocabulary following a listening task enhance student listening comprehension?

Participants

The participants in this group were school aged English learners. There were 24 participants total. This collection of students consisted of both male and female and a variety of languages. Participants in this study attend a k-12 school district that contains 64 different languages. The table below reflects the languages spoken and number of students who speak each language. Students in this study have identified themselves as speaking one of the listed languages. However, the exact numbers and languages will not be discussed in order to keep participant confidentiality.

Table 1

Languages Spoken by Participants

Language	Number of Students
Spanish	385
Vietnamese	105
Arabic	86
Hmong	68
Somali	39
Other	160

Students from the same grade have similar English language proficiencies. They have been placed in proficiency clusters for classroom instruction. These small groups are determined by student scores on the state English proficiency placement test, also known as the WIDA- ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT). The WIDA (2014) model has been designed to target newly enrolled English language students through a series of proficiency assessments. These tests provide information on the listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities of all K-12 English language students. Students acquire a score in each of the four language domains, as well as, a composite score. All scores fall on a 6-point scale, 6.0 being the most proficient in English and 1.0 being the least proficiency in English. Student get placed into the EL program based on the state administered, grade level English proficiency assessment. These assessments determine the students who qualify for direct support in an academic or classroom setting Due to the regulations of school district involved in this study, all students who receive below a 3.0 composite score qualify for direct English language services. The participants in this study have all received a score below 3.0, therefore, qualifying for direct English services due to their lower English proficiency level. This support happens daily in a small group or 1-1 setting. Since these students have been identified through the same state test, all participants are coming into the study with equal levels of English proficiency. Students who enroll or qualify after the study has begun, have been excluded from the study, as well.

Participant Materials

The readings and vocabulary words presented in this study were provided by an enrichment curriculum called Time for Kids (2017). This curriculum is intended for grades K-6. Time for Kids mimics Time Magazine and is meant to educate school aged students on current events using kid friendly and age appropriate language. The current events discussed

and the difficulty level were deemed age and skill set appropriate for these learners. Time for Kids provided vocabulary words for the students to acquire through the reading. In addition to these words, I selected Tier 1 (frequently encountered words) and tier 2 words (words specific to content) to teach and assess. The selected text was read aloud to the students, as the focus of this study was listening comprehension. An assessment was created to reflect the reading and the selected vocabulary words. All post tests were administered in a paper and pencil format. Each posttest consisted of 4 questions. Each question was given the answer options of true, false, or not in the text. Participants were instructed to circle one of the answer choices. All questions were created using the revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy of Higher Order Thinking (Krathwohl, 2002, pp. 214-215). Questions were developed from the remembering and understanding levels. This ensured comprehension questions targeted the vocabulary learned and were an accurate reflection on individual comprehension of the passage.

Participants were given a set of three Time for Kids magazines, one assigned to each condition and the control condition.

Grade 3.

Pre-teaching vocabulary condition 1:

Time for Kids, November 11, 2016, article *Where the Buffalo Roam*

target vocabulary words: bison, symbol, conservationist, ecosystem, graze

Time for Kids, January 27, 2017 article *Goodbye to the Circus*

target vocabulary words: spectacle, exotic, acrobats, decline

Time for Kids, February 24, 2017 article *Danger in California*

target vocabulary words: evacuate, spillway, dam

Post teaching vocabulary condition 2:

Time for Kids, December 9, 2016, article *What's for Lunch? a food historian looks at school lunch programs*

      target vocabulary words: debate, act, ensure, essential

Time for Kids, March 3, 2017, article *Suiting Up*

      target vocabulary words: engineer, modular, diverse, innovative

Time for Kids March 17, 2017, article *The Future of Zoos*

      target vocabulary: enclosure, captivity, vegetation, tundra

Condition 3:

Time for Kids, November 9, 2016, article *A Day to Remember: December 7 marks the 75th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, in Hawaii*

      target vocabulary: infamy, grudge, conflict, sacrifice

Time for Kids, January 20, 2017, article *A Race to Survive*

      target vocabulary: range, conservationists, status, species

Time for Kids, September 30, 2016 article *A Helping Hand*

      target vocabulary: shelter, welfare, pantry, fund

Grade 2.

Pre-teaching vocabulary condition 1:

Time for Kids, October 2015 article *Gifts from the Garden*

      target vocabulary: seedling, donated, squash, harvest

Time for Kids, December 2015/January 2016 article *Saving Sea Lions*

      target vocabulary mammals, survive, oil, washed up

Time for Kids, March 2016 article *Water Worries*

> target vocabulary: drought, conservation, community

Post teaching vocabulary condition 2:

Time for Kids, April 2016 article *Protecting Pandas*

> target vocabulary: reserve, habitat, scientist

Time for Kids, April 2016, article *The New Ten*

> target vocabulary: democracy, hero, features

Time for Kids, November 2015 article *Drumming up Fun*

> target vocabulary: tradition, popular, tribes, carrying a tune

Condition 3:

Time for Kids, December 2015/January 2016, article *Food for Friends*

> target vocabulary: foundation, supplies, homeless, shelter

Time for Kids, November 2016, article *A Caring Camp*

> target vocabulary: veterans, archery, issues, military

Time for Kids, December 2016/January 2017, article *No More Snow Days*

> target vocabulary: e-learning, superintendent, avoid

Grade K-1.

Pre-teaching vocabulary condition 1:

Time for Kids, December 2016/January 2017 article *Over the River*

> target vocabulary: bridge, crane, replace, steel

Time for Kids, November 2016, article *Taking a Trip*

> target vocabulary: migrate, mountain, antelope

Time for Kids October 2016, article *Out of this World*

target vocabulary: soil, astronaut, light (as in weight)

Post teaching vocabulary condition 2:

Time for Kids, December 2016/January 2017 article *Life in the Water*

target vocabulary: mammals, shallow, thick

Time for Kids, February 2017, article *Winter Wonders*

target vocabulary: festival, carve, sculptures

Time for Kids, February 2017, article *Cool Cats*

target vocabulary: pounce, prey, paws

Condition 3:

Time for Kids, December 2016/January 2017, article *Happy Holidays!*

target vocabulary: celebrate, honors, traditions

Time for Kids, February 2017, article *Dare to Dream*

target vocabulary: unfair, march, memorial

Time for Kids, October 2016, article *All About Owls*

target vocabulary: senses, nocturnal, carnivores

All students were provided age appropriate assessments; however, some students received an adjusted answer sheet. The answer sheets for each assessment can be found in the appendix. Pictorial representations of the answers were provided for those students who I perceived as needing to visually see less written language in order to best answer the questions. These students received an answer sheet with pictures representing multiple choice answers "true," "false," or "not in the text." Answer option "true" was depicted as a thumb up, "false" was as a thumbs down, and "not in the text" was represented by an X.

Study Procedure

The start of this study began once the students were accustomed to the expected rituals and routines of the classroom and small group. This eliminated outside factors that may affect the data produced. Also, practice tests not connected to this study were given so students could be fluent in their expectations during the test and how to take the test correctly. These practice tests were identical to the study assessments with regard to the use of the paper and pencil format, vocabulary delivery, and questions derived from the revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy of Higher Order Thinking (Krathwohl, 2002, pp. 214-215). Students were administered 3 practice tests, one assessment to represent each of the condition formats. Conducting the pre-assessments in the same fashion as the study assessments provided opportunity for discussion about the operation of the test, as well as, eliminating any student confusion. Planned movement breaks were incorporated into each condition to guarantee the duration of wait time between vocabulary instruction/listening activity and listening assessment were the same. Students were also led through these movements breaks during the practice assessments.

The first condition students engaged in explicit vocabulary instruction for 5 minutes prior to the listening task. The specific vocabulary words were provided by the curriculum. These words were embedded in the passages being used. These students were provided with the definition, use in a sentence, and if applicable, pictorial representation of the word. Students were also provided time to practice orally stating the word. According to the study done by McKeown (1993), revised definitions were more effective than dictionary definitions when teaching vocabulary. Based on this theory, all target vocabulary words were introduced with a revised definition. These revised definitions were presented with language best suited

for student age and language proficiency. The target vocabulary word was accompanied with a

picture, as well as, provided in a sentence to help deepen understanding. Once introduced

students were asked to quickly apply what they had learned by discussing with a partner or

performing a quick independent check in to reinforce understanding. Below is a slide from a

powerpoint that was used in this study to introduce one of the target vocabulary words.

Figure 1. Slide used to introduce the target vocabulary word drought.

All the participants in this study belong to a 1:1 district, meaning all students are

provided an electronic device. In this case, the electronic device provided is an iPad.

Throughout all vocabulary instruction, students were able to access and view the slides via the

iPad. During the study students first listened to the word "drought" stated once by the teacher.

The students were then asked to repeat the word "drought." After repeating the word, the

teacher stated the vocabulary word once more and read aloud the revised definition of the

word. Following the explanation of the word students voluntarily shared what they noticed in

the pictures representing the word "drought." Once the conversations were complete, the teacher read the sentence on the slide containing the target vocabulary word. At the end of the discussion students were expected to independently circle the picture representing the word "drought" to show understanding of the word.

 Participants were instructed to listen for the word/words as the passage was read to them. Background knowledge was not developed prior to reading; however, a quick introduction of the topic was given before the listening activity began. Students were expected to practice their comprehension of the passage using the newly learned vocabulary. A passage was read aloud to them 2x through. They did not receive visual assistance, such as pictures, pictorial representation of the passage may affect the data collected. Engaged visual stimulation could have provided a way for participants to collect or infer meaning or information about the text. Once the students completed the listening portion of the activity, they were prompted to participate in a timed, 5-minute movement break. After the movement break, the assessments were administered for students to perform individually. This assessment was specifically created to align with the passage and vocabulary words. The assessment was also read out loud to them. The students were responsible for circling the correct answer. To ensure students answer honestly, students were placed in areas of the room that provided distance between participants. This protected their answers from neighboring students. These tasks were performed by all students three times. This assessment was used to determine the level of listening comprehension. The assessment included comprehension questions based on the passage read aloud to them, as well as, the meaning of discussed vocabulary.

 The second condition of this study used the same students. All students participated in explicit vocabulary instruction for 5 minutes after the listening task. The specific vocabulary

words were provided by the curriculum. Similar to the first condition, these words were

embedded in the passages being used. These students were provided with the definition, use in

a sentence, and if applicable, pictorial representation of the word. Students were also provided

time to practice orally stating the word. Similar to condition one, students were provided a

revised definition of the target vocabulary words. These revised definitions were presented

with language best suited for student age and language proficiency. The target vocabulary

word was accompanied with a picture, as well as, provided in a sentence to help deepen

understanding. Once introduced students were asked to quickly apply what they learned by

discussing with a partner or performing a quick independent check in to reinforce

understanding. Below is a slide from a powerpoint that was used in this study to introduce one

of the target vocabulary words.

Figure 2. Slide used to introduce the target vocabulary word paw

Once again, all participants in this study belong to a 1:1 district, meaning all students are provided an electronic device. In this case, the electronic device provided is an iPad. Throughout all vocabulary instruction, students were able to access and view the slides via the iPad. During the study students first listened to the word "paw" stated once by the teacher. The students were then asked to repeat the word "paw." After repeating the word, the teacher stated the vocabulary word once more and read aloud the revised definition of the word. Following the explanation of the word students voluntarily shared what they noticed in the pictures representing the word "paw." Once the conversations were complete, the teacher read the sentence on the slide containing the target vocabulary word. To conclude this word practice, students turned to a partner to discuss their answers to the question "what other animals have paws?" Their answers were shared in order to monitor understanding of the target vocabulary word. However, the vocabulary words were explicitly taught after the listening task was completed. An introduction to the topic of the reading passage was given, but no pre-teaching took place. Students were able to practice listening and understanding the passage. A passage was read to them 2x through. They did not receive visual assistance, such as pictures. Once the students completed the listening portion of the activity, they received explicit vocabulary instruction. When both the listening task and vocabulary instruction were completed, the students participated in a timed 5-minute movement break. Students were then administered the independent comprehension assessment. Once again, similar to the first condition, this assessment was specifically created to align with the passage and vocabulary words. The assessment was read out loud to them. After each question students were responsible for circling the correct answer. To ensure students answer honestly, students were placed in areas of the room that provided distance between participants. This protected their answers from

neighboring students. All tasks were performed three times by each student. Once again, this assessment was used to determine the level of listening comprehension. The assessment included comprehension questions based on the passage read aloud to them. This assessment was used to gauge the understanding of the discussed vocabulary.

The in condition 3 students received no prior or post explanation of the desired vocabulary words. The students were given a brief introduction of the topic but no background knowledge of the text or vocabulary words were discussed. The article was read to the students 2x through. Once the listening task concluded students had a 5-minute movement break. Following the movement break students were given the assessment. After the assessment was given and collected students were then explicitly taught the targeted vocabulary. This was to ensure their vocabulary needs are not neglected. The assessment was specifically created to align with the passage and vocabulary words. The assessment was read out loud, as well. After each question students were responsible for circling the correct answer. To ensure students answer honestly, students were placed in areas of the room that provided distance between participants. Similar to the other two conditions, all students participated in this testing format 3 times. Once again, this assessment was used to determine if introducing vocabulary makes a difference in students' comprehension of the passage. The assessment included comprehension questions based on the passage read aloud to them. This assessment was also used gauge the understanding of the discussed vocabulary. The table below shows each condition and the order of instruction.

Table 2

Condition and Order of Instruction

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Condition 1	vocabulary instruction	listening activity	5-minute movement break	listening assessment
Condition 2	listening activity	vocabulary instruction	5-minute movement break	listening assessment
Condition 3	listening activity	5-minute movement break	listening assessment	vocabulary instruction

These series of assessments took place in a 3-week period. Students took the tests in a

rotating fashion. All students received each condition; however, it was not in consecutive

order. Students had the opportunity to undergo condition 1, then the control condition, while

others experienced the control condition first then condition 2. This rotation removed the

potential for students to experience the order effect, which can influence task performance.

These tests were administered sporadically in a 3-week span. Participants were divided into

three groups. Each group experienced the various conditions (i.e., C1) in rotating order. This

table only shows each group of students completing one full cycle of a condition; however, a

similar pattern was used for each group to complete all cycles of each condition. The following

table is a visual representation of the assessment order:

Table 3

Visual Presentation of Assessment Order

Student Group	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
A	C1	C3	C2
B	C2	C1	C3
C	C3	C2	C1

Chapter 4: Analysis

The data being considered is based on the number of correct assessment answers for condition 1, condition 2, and the control condition. To analyze the data, all assessments were given a score based on the number of correct assessment answers. The mean for each condition was calculated separately, as well as, the standard deviation for each condition. All grade levels are represented and calculated together in the data set for each condition. The standard deviation for all conditions was calculated to evaluate the clustering of student scores and determine if these testing conditions provide valid insight to the assessment effectiveness. Once the mean and standard deviation were determined, cross condition comparisons were made to determine similarities, differences, and overlaps. Reoccurring test scores were grouped together to determine the points scored most often. This subgrouping gave insight to any commonalities among individual tests.

Condition 1. Table 4 shows the total number of participants and assessments, as well as, the frequency in which students scored 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4 points for all conditions. All participants in condition 1 took this assessment format 3 times. The data in condition 1 indicates that 34 out of 72 assessments scored a total of 2 out of 4 points. The next highest category shows the amount of assessments in the 3-point range. There are 19 assessments that scored 3 out of 4 total points. Students appeared more successful in this point range, than those who received 1 total point, however, both are still significantly lower than the total number of assessments in the 2-point range. The total number of assessments that scored 0 or 4 points is the same.

Table 4

Number of Participants, Assessments, and Frequency for All Conditions

Condition	Total Participants	Total Assessments	Mean	Standard Deviation	0 total points	1 total point	2 total points	3 total points	4 total points
1	24	72	2.02	.838	2	15	34	19	2
2	24	72	1.6	.838	3	8	35	23	3
3	24	72	1.5	.819	6	28	29	9	0

Since the mean, or the average score of this condition is 2.02 points correct, the condition 1 assessment format was not strongly effective for the majority of students in this sample. This suggests that teaching vocabulary prior to a listening task did not enhance their listening comprehension.

Due to the high fluctuation between the total assessments in each point range, this information suggests the majority of participants taking the assessment fall within some level of chance. When considering this high level of chance, I can conclude that pre-teaching vocabulary prior to a listening task does not enhance listening comprehension.

Condition 2. All participants in condition 2 took this assessment format three times. This condition reflects information similar to condition 1 in regard to the highest number of assessments received 2 out of 4 total points. The data shows that 35 out of 72 assessments scored 2 out of 4 total points on these assessments. The next closest point category shows 23 out of 72 assessments scored 3 total points. This is also similar to condition 1. However, those assessments that scored 1 total point is considerably lower in this condition. Once again, the number of assessments with the score of 0 and 4 points are the same.

Since the average score in this condition was a 1.6, it can be assumed that students, in general, did not find this condition format to be the most effective when it comes to listening comprehension. Looking at the information collectively, both conditions reflect a similar mean and standard deviation, as well as, similar assessment score frequencies. Due to these similarities, it can be assumed the format of condition 1 and condition 2 had a similar effect on listening comprehension. Neither condition 1 nor condition 2 drastically impacted the listening comprehension in English Language Learners. On the whole, we can assume the timing of explicit vocabulary in either condition did not further enhance the participants listening comprehension of the reading passages.

Both conditions also suggest that students fall into some level of chance. Due to the level of chance in this condition, it is clear that teaching vocabulary after a listening task does not increase listening comprehension.

Condition 3. All participants in condition 3 took this assessment format 3 times. This condition reflects the highest amount of assessments once again fell in the 2-point range, 29 out of 72 assessments. Even though the 2-point range is still the highest range, the amount of assessments in this range is lower than the previous conditions. A close second is the 1-point range, 28 out of 72 assessments scored 1 point. This ranking of score frequency is different from both condition 1 and condition 2. Following are the assessments that fell in the 3 point range. The total number of assessments that scored 3 total points was 9 out of 72 total assessments. Not only is this sequence different from the other two conditions, the number of assessments is considerably lower than the other two conditions. The table also indicates two other differences, 6 assessments scored 1 point and 0 assessments received a perfect score of 4

points. On average, students only scored a 1.5 on their assessments. This data suggests this testing format was ineffective for the majority of students.

Condition 3 results were vastly different from those of condition 1 and 2. The data in this condition shows no assessment received 4 points. In comparison, condition 1 had 3 assessments receive 4 out of 4 total points and condition 2 had 2 assessments receive 4 out of 4 total points. Furthermore, condition 3 had 6 assessments receive 0 total points, the highest amount of assessments to fall within this point category for all conditions. This information indicates that removing all explicit vocabulary instruction does not enhance listening comprehension, but perhaps, can generally hinder listening comprehension. This data concludes, that both pre-teaching and post teaching vocabulary does enhance in listening comprehension, however, teaching vocabulary in any sense is more beneficial than not explicitly teaching vocabulary at all.

In addition to these results the Statistical Consulting Team at St. Cloud State University used the JMP version 14 analysis software to perform a LSMeans Differences Tukey HSD test to compare the outcome of each condition. The LSMeans, or Least Squares Means is an estimation method used to compute the means and standard deviation of each condition. Embedded within the LSMeans procedure is a Tukey HSD test, or Tukey Honestly Significant Difference test. The Tukey HSD test compares the different means using the estimations procedure from the LSMeans Differences to determine differences between conditions. All of the findings from the LSMeans Differences Tukey HSD are shown in the table below. The column labeled "difference" represents the difference in means for the conditions being compared. The "Standard Error Difference" column represents how much the data can fluctuate when comparing the given conditions. The confidence interval for this sample size is

represented by the sections labeled "Lower CL" (lower confidence limit) and "Upper CL" (upper confidence limit). This test is 95% confident the true difference among conditions is represented within this confidence interval. Last, the section marked "p-Value" indicates whether the comparison between conditions has statistical significance.

Table 5

Relationship between Condition Formats

Condition	Condition	Difference	Std. Err Diff	Lower CL	Upper CL	p-Value
2	1	0.1249999	0.1404303	-0.215098	0.465098	0.6492
2	3	0.6805554	0.1404303	0.340457	1.020654	<.0001
1	3	0.5555556	0.1404303	0.215457	0.895654	0.0008

The table above reflects the relationship between condition formats. The leading indicator of these results is the p-Value, or the likelihood of a random result. Looking at the table above, the p-Value for condition 1 and condition 2 has a score higher than 0.05, therefore, indicating the data of this study is weak and with no statistical significance. The findings of this particular sample of L2 learners has a p-Value of .6492 which implies there is about a 65% chance of random results. The information above implies neither pre teaching vocabulary nor post teaching vocabulary enhances listening comprehension in L2 learners.

In regard to the comparison between condition 2 and condition 3, the table above shows a p-Value of < .0001. This low number represents a statistical significance, which implies a very small chance of random results. The data in this comparison indicates that teaching vocabulary after a listening activity improves listening comprehension, rather than not teaching vocabulary at all.

As for the comparison between condition 1 and condition 3, the table above lists a p-Value of .0008. In this comparison the data is statistically significant, meaning, there is a small chance of random results. Similar to the previous comparison, the comparison between condition 1 and condition 3 show that pre teaching vocabulary before a listening activity improves listening comprehension in L2 learners, over not teaching vocabulary at all.

The results of this LMS Means Differences Tukey HSD test show no significant difference between condition 1 and condition 2. The lack of significance proves that pre teaching or post teaching vocabulary does not enhance listening comprehension in this study. However, this test does show that both condition 1 and condition 2 were more effective than condition 3. Therefore, it can be assumed that teaching vocabulary in general, either before or after a listening activity, can enhance listening comprehension is L2 learners. It can also be concluded, that not teaching vocabulary is an ineffective approach to enhancing listening comprehension in L2 learners.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The driving questions of this study were as follows:

1) does teaching unknown vocabulary prior to a listening task enhance student listening comprehension?

2) does teaching unknown vocabulary following a listening task enhance student listening comprehension?

Prior to this study, I came to an assumption based on Chang and Read's (2006) study about multiple exposures and pre-teaching. Change and Read (2006) believe a student can be more successful in oral comprehension if they are given a focus. This type of focus would center around pre-teaching vocabulary and provide multiple exposures of the material. The idea of providing a focus, such as vocabulary, would allow the student to listen with a purpose, resulting in deeper understanding. Personally, I found this concept to be very logical and suitable for my own study, especially in connection to my first question, does teaching unknown vocabulary prior to a listening task enhance student listening comprehension? After Change and Read (2006) performed their study, they found students showed the greatest achievement in topic preview, repetition of input, and question preview. On the other hand, they concluded students were less successful when assessed on vocabulary. Chang and Read's (2006) study is similar to my own in two ways, our thought process and our results. Collectively, both studies believed the idea of narrowing down students' thoughts and giving them a focus would enhance their understanding of an oral task. However, both studies indicate this thought process did not enhance student performance in regard to vocabulary. Both studies show previous exposure to vocabulary did not enhance student comprehension of a listening task.

In my opinion, I believe the exposure to the vocabulary was more comforting to the participants but was not enough to enhance comprehension of the listening task. According to a later study done by Chang (2007) even the amount of practice and exposure to vocabulary did not enhance student comprehension in a listening task. However, students were more skillful in strategy usage and expressed more confidence after the extra practice and exposure. Contrary to Chang's (2007) study, I believe the participants in my study are of an age where extra practice and exposure would greatly enhance comprehension. However, the amount of practice and exposure needed to make the difference would be unrealistic for this study, as well as, unnatural for everyday situations, considering vocabulary is not discussed in depth during a conversation or other real-world listening tasks. I have also found through my study, that exposure to the vocabulary, in general, was beneficial to listening comprehension. The results of this study do not show a significant difference on the timing of explicit vocabulary instruction, but it does show that no exposure at all was hindering to student listening comprehension. These findings support Change's (2007) study in the sense that multiple or singular exposures to the vocabulary may not significantly improve listening comprehension, but it certainly did not impede understanding like we saw with no exposures to the target vocabulary.

When explicitly teaching vocabulary in order to enhance student listening comprehension it is important to consider the amount of known vocabulary words a L2 learner already possesses. According to Feng Teng (2014) L2 learners who know 5,000 or more word families are more successful in listening comprehension compared to their peers with less than 5,000 word families. This serves as a reminder that the success of student listening comprehension does not only fall on the vocabulary instruction itself, but also, the amount of

known vocabulary words. Those who have a smaller working vocabulary will naturally comprehend less of the spoken language than those who have more. Feng Teng (2014) suggests that educators take all opportunities to teach vocabulary, not only to enhance listening comprehension, but to increase vocabulary knowledge. This will then contribute to a deeper understanding of the spoken language because of the amount of known vocabulary words. Teng (2014) also believes that listening comprehension will be enhanced when L2 learner's amount of vocabulary has increased. This study examined the best timing for explicit vocabulary instruction to enhance listening comprehension, what this study lacks is knowing how many known words the participants already had. Determining the participants known vocabulary before introducing the target vocabulary could have changed, even enhanced, the students listening comprehension of the articles read aloud, especially if more unknown vocabulary words were introduced. Providing ample opportunities for increasing student's known word families will ultimately be a more successful way to impact student listening comprehension.

In this study, explicit vocabulary instruction post listening task had similar results to explicit vocabulary instruction prior to a listening task. Even though the strategies to perform the listening task differ, the idea of knowing vocabulary words in order to successfully participate and comprehend the oral language are similar. The information found through this study supports Stenius Staehr's (2009) and Teng's (2014) thoughts on the breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge. In regard to vocabulary and listening comprehension Stenius Staehr (2009) and Teng (2014) share a common belief, the more vocabulary words an individual has the more the individual will understand the spoken language.

After researching similar studies and analyzing the data produced in my own study, I am now able to better understand the importance of vocabulary and its impact on listening comprehensions. In regard to my professional career as an English as a Second Language teacher, I plan to spend time implementing the new insights I have gained throughout this study. Previously, I believed explicit vocabulary instruction was most impactful before a listening task, I now know the timing does not have a significant difference, I plan to engage my students in various timings of vocabulary instruction. By teaching vocabulary before and after a listening task I hope I not only enhance vocabulary knowledge, but also target student preferences. When teaching to these different preferences, perhaps students will retain more vocabulary. As an English as a Second Language teacher, I understand the importance of teaching vocabulary, however, this study has now solidified this importance. With the backing of this study, it is my intention to share this knowledge with my peers and encourage them to incorporate explicit vocabulary instruction into their teaching practices.

Limitations

In this study, there were various limitations that may have impacted the final results. The intention of the study was to focus on listening comprehension. The participants were in fact listening; however, they were listening to a written text that was read aloud to them rather than listening to natural speech. Since written language contains different sentence structures, vocabulary, and cadence, students listening comprehension could have impacted, therefore, affecting the results of this study.

When thinking about typical primary level classrooms, varying grades have students engage in different types of read aloud stories and activities. Students in lower grades, often, are used to hearing the story with picture representation. This not only helps the students to

comprehend but also holds student engagement for longer periods of time. As students progress into the older grades, teacher begin to read chapter books. These types of stories tend to have very little or no picture representation, hence, building the students engagement stamina. Participants in this study received no picture representation during the listening activity, because of this, I believe the younger students had a more challenging time staying focused and engaged. Or, if students were engaged but did not understand, they had zero visual representation to assist their comprehension. With this assessment format, I believe the data of the younger students was hindered because it was atypical from their general education classroom. As far as the older grades, they have been taught to practice staying engaged without picture representation, as well as, skills and strategies to use when they do not understand what is being read. The level in which the students were conditioned in different skill sets and amounts of picture representation could have been a factor that impacted the data of this study.

Another limitation to consider is student tardiness or absences. Since this study consists of English Language Learners, many students have connections outside of the country. Very often students leave the country for extended periods of time, resulting in gaps in education and educational practices. Some students had just returned from out of the country at the start of this study. Other students, left during the study and upon return to school, finished the assessments connected to this study.

The questions and answer choices on the assessment could have impacted student scores. All of the assessments were given multiple choice answers of "true," "false," and "not in the text." To answer the question accurately, the student must first know and understand the question as a whole, accurately remember what they heard during the listening task, and then

decide if the information provided is correct, incorrect, or if it was never mentioned during the listening task. It is not very often students are provided information that is close enough to be related to the text but is not actually in the text they heard. Also, it is not common for students in everyday language to decipher information that is perhaps only partially true. This type of thinking is what drives the ability to accurately choose between "false" and "not in the text." Since students do not often need to make choices like this in everyday language, I believe this may have altered the accuracy in which students were answering the questions.

I also believe some of the questions in the assessments were slightly to distracting and inauthentic. For instance, in one of the control condition assessments, *A Race to Survive,* the question stated, "Cheetahs live in Africa, Asia, and the United States." The correct answer is "false", however, many students answered "true." I believe this to be an inauthentic question with a high level of distraction because 2 of the 3 locations mentioned in the question were true, therefore, students automatically chose true with disregard to the third location. I believe if the question was adjusted to be more clearly incorrect, the students would have had a better chance of answering correctly. The lack of authenticity and high level of distraction in some questions on the assessments created a limitation, therefore, impacting the data.

An alternative answer sheet was created the best suit my perception of what was appropriate for each student. Students were given an assessment with the appropriate level questions, however, the assessment consisted of symbols for the answers rather than words. For instance, when participants wanted to answer "true" they were instructed to circle the image of a thumbs up. A thumbs down represented "false" and X represented "not in the text." I believe this pictorial representation did not best match the concept of "true," "false," or "not in the text" for some students. This limitation could impact the results of this study.

Limitations such as amount of food and sleep, home life, social interactions, and time of day in which assessment was given all could have impacted student performance. Many of the participants are from various cultural backgrounds, therefore, different cultural or religious expectations and events could also greatly influence how students perform on the assessment.

Recommendations for Future Studies

There are a few recommendations to consider when researching further into the topic of explicit vocabulary instruction and listening comprehension. When restructuring this study, one might consider the amount of schooling and age level of the participants. Students with more years of schooling, perhaps grades 6-8 or 9-12 could be less reliant on pictorial representation while listening and pictorial representation on the assessments themselves. As far as material used for the study, reading aloud different types of written language may give a more rounded idea of students listening comprehension abilities. This study was limited to only non-fiction material, however, reading aloud fiction, various types of dialog, such as oral language conversations, scripted speech or unscripted speech (i.e., interviews), written dialog (i.e., script for a play), or poems would have exposed the participants to various types of written language and could provide deeper insight to the participants' abilities.

In response to the data this study found, it is suggested that educators explicitly teach vocabulary to L2 learners. According to one of the data points of this study, teaching vocabulary prior to a listening comprehension seems to have the greatest impact on listening comprehension. However, explicitly teaching vocabulary in general impacts listening comprehension over not teaching vocabulary at all.

In conclusion, this study was created to find the most effective timing of explicit vocabulary instruction. This study did not support my initial prediction of explicitly teaching

vocabulary prior to a listening task will enhance student listening comprehension, however, it does show the importance of vocabulary knowledge. Much like many of the other research studies discussed, my study shows the particular timing of vocabulary instruction does not make an impact on student comprehension of the oral language. However, my data does show that removing all explicit vocabulary instruction hinders student listening comprehension. Overall, teaching vocabulary in some form, whether it before or after a listening task, can assist in listening comprehension, in comparison to removing vocabulary instruction completely.

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Appendix A: Condition 1 Assessments

<u>A New Bridge (a)</u>

1) To build the bridge the men will use a crane?

   O true   O false   O not in the text

2) To keep birds safe, workers put a camera on their nest to watch them.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

3) The new bridge will be made out of wood.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Bridges do not take very long to make.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

Mission to Mars (b)

1) Astronauts are people who travel to different countries?

   O true   O false   O not in the text

2) Astronauts wear suits that are very light so they are easy to move in.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

3) Astronauts are learning how to grow plants on Mars.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Astronauts have traveled to all the planets.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

Animals on the Move (c)

1) When animals migrate, they go to warmer places for the winter.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

2) Antelopes do not migrate, they stay in the mountains.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

3) Animals will migrate by land, sea, and air?

   O true   O false   O not in the text

4) All animals travel in big groups when they migrate.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

Water Worries (a)

1) Droughts happen all over the U.S.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

2) When an area does not get enough rain, they are in a drought.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

3) People do not have to follow the rules to help cut back on water

    O true   O false   O not in the text

4) A way to help conserve water is to take longer showers.
    O true   O false   O not in the text

Saving Sea Lions (b)

1) Workers helped clean the seals because they had oil on their fur.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

2) Washed up on the beach means the seal pups are playing on the beaches.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

3) Scientists think the mothers have to leave the pups alone for too long, making the pups unsafe.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Only seals and their pups are having trouble in the oceans.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

The New Ten (c)

1) The new ten is getting special features. This will make it harder for people to make fake money.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

2) It is not important for the woman on the new ten is American.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

3) All of the United States money will be changing

   O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Changing the $10 bill will make it more secure.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

Where the Buffalo Roam (a)

1) When you are person who wants to help protect animals and the environment you are a conservationist.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

2) A horse used to be the U.S. National animal, now it is the bison.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

3) Since the bison is the U.S. National animal, they are going to change the U.S. National flag, too.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Another name for bison is buffalo.

O true   O false   O not in the text

Goodbye to the Circus (b)

1) People who go to the circus also love going to see plays and movies.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

2) A beautiful display or performance is a spectacle.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

3) The circus is ending because not enough people want to go watch the circus.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Acrobats are people who are in charge of the circus.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

Danger in California (c)

1) When you are told to evacuate, you are told to stay in the same place.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

2) A dam is something the blocks water from spilling or flowing.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

3) Since the dam was fixed, it never spilled again.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Not only people in California have to worry about dams spilling.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

Appendix B: Condition 2 Assessments

Ocean Mammals (a)

1) Sea otters need thick fur to help them float?

   O true   O false   O not in the text

2) Mammals live in the water but breath air.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

3) Mammals are all meat eaters.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

4) There are types of mammals that live in the water but can also go on land.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

Winter Wonders (b)

1) People like to visit St. Paul in the summer too.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

2) The winter festival has many different snow activities like sledding and lights.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

3) The sculptures are made out of cement and clay.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

4) The festival has been going on for many years.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

Cool Cats (c)

1) Wild cats pounce on their prey.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

2) Wild cats only hunt at night

   O true   O false   O not in the text

3) Lions are the only cats that live in groups.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Wild cats only live in the United States.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

Protecting Pandas (a)

1) The scientists wear panda costumes so the pandas do not get used to seeing humans.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

2) The number of pandas was going down because their habitat was disappearing.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

3) When animals are in a wild life reserve they are unsafe and unprotected.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Only panda babies are kept safe on the reserve.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

Gifts From the Garden (b)

1) To donate means to make people pay for something they need or want

   O true   O false   O not in the text

2) You harvest crops in your garden so you can use them or sell them.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

3) Katie and her classmates created a garden to grow crops and give them to those in need.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Katie sends her harvested crops all over the United States.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

Drumming up Fun(c)

1) Right now Native American music is popular.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

2) The boys sing at powwows as part of their family tradition.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

3) The brothers have had a chance to sing in many different places

    O true   O false   O not in the text

4) The brothers goal is to sing in different competitions to help earn money for their tribe.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

What's for Lunch? (a)

1) The article says "a nutritious lunch essential". That means something that is very important to a nutritious lunch.

O true   O false   O not in the text

2) The U.S. government thinks it is important to make sure kids have healthy lunches at school.

O true   O false   O not in the text

3) Kids can decide if they want a healthy lunch or an unhealthy lunch.

O true   O false   O not in the text

4) The plan to get kids a healthier lunch is not working and needs to be fixed.

O true   O false   O not in the text

The Future of Zoos(b)

1) People who work in zoos are worried that people will not want to come anymore.

O true   O false   O not in the text

2) Animals are going to be moving to different zoos if they need a better place to live.

O true   O false   O not in the text

3) Captivity means to be living out in the wild with no people or cages.

O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Many professionals believe that zoos should stay exactly the same. No changes should be made.

O true   O false   O not in the text

Suiting Up(c)

1) Dust can be a big problem in a space suit.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

2) Modular suits will have parts that can be taken off and a new one put back on.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

3) They are creating suits that will be better for wearing here on earth.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

4) People will be able to buy these suits if they want to have one.

O true   O false   O not in the text

Appendix C: Control Condition Assessments

Happy Holidays(a)

1) Fireworks are only used to celebrate the 4th of July.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

2) Christmas, Kwanzaa, and Hanukkah are all holidays that happen in December

   O true   O false   O not in the text

3) All holidays have the same traditions.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Kids like holiday celebrations more than adults.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

Dare to Dream (b)

1) Martin Luther King Jr. traveled all over the world to give speeches.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

2) Unfair laws are laws that everyone is happy with

   O true   O false   O not in the text

3) A memorial is a way to remember someone important.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Martin Luther King Jr. marched for voting rights

   O true   O false   O not in the text

All About Owls (c)

1) Owls have very sharp senses that help them hunt.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

2) Owls sleep at night and are awake during the day.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

3) Owls are carnivores. That means they eat only plants

   O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Some owls do not fly.

   O true   O false   O not in the text

Food for Friends (a)

1) The kids in the reading think giving food to the homeless is like sharing food with friends.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

2) Twice a month homeless people have to work at a restaurant to get a meal.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

3) They started a foundation because they wanted to make a group that can help others.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Only kids are part of the Eimers foundation.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

No More Snow Days (b)

1) When the kids want to avoid making up their school days, that means they want to do it.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

2) The kids stay home and do their school work, they call it e-learning

    O true   O false   O not in the text

3) School districts in Minnesota have e-learning on snow days.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

4) The person in charge of the school district is called the superintendent.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

A Caring Camp(c)

1) All kids are welcome to go to the caring camp.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

2) Veterans are people who used to be in the military.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

3) Kids can do archery, which is throwing horseshoes at a pole in the ground.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Kids have to hunt for their own food at this camp.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

A Day to Remember (a)

1) A grudge means to feel anger towards something or someone for a very long time

    O true   O false   O not in the text

2) The president today still takes time to celebrate and remember Pearle Harbor.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

3) A sacrifice is when something is given up to accomplish a goal or to help.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

4) The United States was happy to join the war.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

A Helping Hand(b)

1) Thinking of a pet's welfare means you are thinking of how to give them away.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

2) It is hard for families to pay for the things animals need, so they have to give their pets away.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

3) There are shelters that will not take animals that are sick.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

4) When people go to a food pantry they have to pay for the pet food they need.

    O true   O false   O not in the text

A Race to Survive (c)

1) When animals are extinct, all of them have died off and the species is gone for good.

O true   O false   O not in the text

2) Cheetahs live in Africa, Asia, and the United States

O true   O false   O not in the text

3) If there are no animals for the cheetah's to eat, they will start to eat plants.

O true   O false   O not in the text

4) Cheetah's are running out of animals to hunt and eat.

O true   O false   O not in the text

Appendix D: Alternative Assessment

1)

2)

3)

4)

Appendix E: IRB Approval Letter

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Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Name: Whitney Nasca

Email: nawh0601@stcloudstate.edu

IRB PROTOCOL DETERMINATION:
Expedited Review-2

Project Title: How Explicit Vocabulary Instruction Impacts Listening Comprehension in English Language Learners

Advisor John Madden

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).

- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.

-Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.

- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.

- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-4932 or email ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

IRB Chair:

Dr. Benjamin Witts
Associate Professor- Applied Behavior Analysis
Department of Community Psychology,Counseling, and Family Therapy

IRB Institutional Official:

Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan
Interim Associate Provost for Research
Dean of Graduate Studies

OFFICE USE ONLY

SCSU IRB# 1782 - 2259	**Type:** Expedited Review-2	**Today's Date:** 2/23/2018
1st Year Approval Date: 2/23/2018	**2nd Year Approval Date:**	**3rd Year Approval Date:**
1st Year Expiration Date: 2/22/2019	**2nd Year Expiration Date:**	**3rd Year Expiration Date:**