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Perspectives of Adult ESL Teachers on the Use of Direct Vocabulary Instruction with Adult ELLs

Erica N. Pettis
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Erica N. Pettis

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Dr. Amy White, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Nancy Williams, Committee Member, Education Faculty
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Walden University
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Abstract

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MEd, Wayne State University, 2002

BA, Central Michigan University, 1989

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

With the growing number of non-native English speakers, improving communication through direct vocabulary instruction (DVI) is important. The problem investigated in this study was that English as a second language (ESL) teachers were not using the strategy DVI, in the ESL classroom. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore ESL teachers' perspectives about DVI for adult English language learners (ELLs) in a Midwestern state. The conceptual framework was drawn from Vygotsky's constructivist theory because ESL teachers construct meaning from their experiences and what they have learned about vocabulary to improve reading comprehension for adult ELLs. The research question was used to ask about the perspectives of ESL teachers about DVI as a strategy to improve reading comprehension for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills. The participants were 11 ESL teachers from different school settings who volunteered to participate in interviews via the Zoom platform. Data were analyzed using open, thematic coding to identify patterns and develop themes which were: (a) teachers use a variety of instructional techniques, (b) teachers increased use of technology, (c) teachers lack direct/explicit vocabulary instruction in skill areas, and (d) teachers reported barriers to implementing DVI. The findings, if used to drive improvements in DVI with adult ELLs could assist them with better learning outcomes, continuing education, better job opportunities, and social contributions to their communities. These implications support positive social change and the growth and development of ELLs so they could advance their education, seek citizenship, maintain residency, and stimulate the economy with their financial contributions.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Dr. Eugene Ernest Pettis Sr. who is the inspiration behind this labor of love. He was and will always be the light of my life and the spirit that encourages me to conquer my fears and persevere. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the woman who brought me into this world and was my first teacher of many lessons, my mother, Olga Jean Granberry Pettis. I am truly a replica of these beings and their spirits. I will always love you both as I hold onto many precious memories.

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Last and certainly not least, a special thank you to my sister, Kara Simone Pettis for your support (and you know all that you have done). To my grandparents who are no longer on this earth, thank you for the many lessons which helped me get through life. To everyone who had faith in me when my faith wavered, thank you.

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Instruction with Adult ELLs

Reading is a receptive function with the reader accepting what is being read (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). When information is shared between the reader and the material being read, the process becomes interactive (Acosta, 2019; Barrot, 2016). The reader examines the information being read and tries to make sense of the words or symbols through decoding (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). If the reader has learned an adequate amount of vocabulary, then reading may be relatively easy. Assuming the reader's vocabulary is limited, then reading can be a struggle (Acosta, 2019).

Teaching a person to read is a complex process that requires coordination of memory, cognition, and comprehension (Kung, 2019). Researchers have provided support for the efficacy of different approaches to teaching English language learners (ELLs) to read (Alamri & Rogers, 2018) and direct vocabulary instruction (DVI) to increase reading comprehension (Subon, 2016). However, more research was needed to address DVI with adult ELLs as there was a lack of knowledge about this concept among English as a second language (ESL) teachers. With increased knowledge of vocabulary, adult ELLs will have the potential to become more comfortable and confident interacting in their communities among the English majority. This chapter includes the background of the problem, problem statement, purpose of the study, the research question, conceptual framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, significance, and summary.

Background of the Problem

Historically, teachers have taught with the idea that repetition and memorization of words were the best ways to teach ELLs vocabulary. However, vocabulary learning also included the meaning of words and was more than rote memorization (Micán & Medina, 2017). Research showed that vocabulary instruction was necessary for effective learning and comprehension (Acosta, 2019; Subon, 2016). Reading comprehension impacted text comprehension (Wright & Cervetti, 2016) and vocabulary knowledge contributed to reading comprehension (Yousefi & Biria, 2018). It was unknown what ESL teachers believed about DVI, if they used it, or how they used it to improve reading comprehension for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills. This study was needed to provide information to those who teach adult ELLs in language learning, comprehension, and acclimating to an English-speaking society because it shows ESL teachers areas of instruction that require more emphasis to support ELLs in the learning process.

Problem Statement

The problem investigated in this study was that ESL teachers were not using the strategy, DVI, in the ESL classroom. Some studies examined reading comprehension using specific strategies (Davaribina & Asl, 2017; Oliver & Young, 2016; Rawian et al., 2018). For adult ELLs to achieve academically, developing reading skills was important (Oliver & Young, 2016). ELLs have the task of learning academic content, vocabulary, and developing proficiency in English (Vincy, 2018). Bangs and Binder (2016) noted the relationship between word knowledge and reading comprehension indicated that if

students failed to increase the vocabulary knowledge, the reading comprehension could be affected. Vincy (2018) found that DVI had a critical position in the improvement of vocabulary skills which is linked to comprehension. Without an adequate vocabulary there was no comprehension. For comprehension to take place, students must have sufficient background knowledge of vocabulary connected with the topic being discussed (Vander Woude, 2016). Some research has explored reading comprehension, but few authors have examined adult ELLs (Bangs & Binder, 2016). There was not much research on the perspectives of teachers of adult ELLs about the use of DVI in the ESL classroom. To improve reading comprehension, for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills, understanding why teachers are not using this instructional strategy is key.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore ESL teachers' perspectives about DVI for adult ELLs in a Midwestern state. Understanding these perspectives could assist facilitators of teacher education programs to prepare future ESL teachers in using this instructional technique for vocabulary with ELLs to help with comprehension of the English language. When ESL teachers have the tools and resources to provide effective instruction, ELLs benefit in learning. This could also decrease the need for ELLs using translators in English speaking environments, like their children's school, banks, stores, and the doctor's office, making communication the sole responsibility of the English language learner. Furthermore, the improvement in language skills for ELLs opens the doors for better job opportunities, seeking citizenship, and continuing education.

Research Question

What are the perspectives of ESL teachers about DVI as a strategy to improve reading comprehension for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills?

Conceptual Framework

For this study, I used the constructivist view by Vygotsky (1962) for the conceptual framework. He viewed an individual's thinking and meaning as being constructed socially and arising from social interactions within the community (Krahenbuhl, 2016). I used this framework to address factors that affect ESL teachers' construction of knowledge using vocabulary to improve reading comprehension for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills. The constructivist framework frames the construction of knowledge through experiences and the making of meaning (Krahenbuhl, 2016). ESL teachers could construct experiences for ELLs through knowledge, influences, and behaviors that affect instructional routines. Vygotsky viewed humans as social beings being created by the society or community in which they reside (Jovanović, 2020). ESL teachers are social beings shaped by society. According to research, the constructivist framework was advancing as a premiere pedagogical style used by teachers (Krahenbuhl, 2016). This framework aligned with my use of a basic qualitative design with one-on-one interviews, as both are well-suited to collect rich, thick data. The data collected from the ESL teachers showed how personal experiences, background knowledge, and pedagogy influenced instructional delivery to ELLs. Teachers construct cognition through social experiences, influences, and background knowledge.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a basic qualitative design. Qualitative inquiry has been characterized as flexible and descriptive (Aspers & Corte, 2019). A basic qualitative inquiry includes natural setting, researcher as primary instrument, multiple methods, and reflexivity, just to name a few (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I collected data from 11 ESL teachers to gain their perspectives about DVI to improve reading comprehension for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills. I used a qualitative inquiry to encourage ESL teachers to address questions candidly and openly. The participants were able to elaborate and share personal experiences of teaching with adult ELLs. The participants often went in-depth with responses providing rich, thick data. I collected data using one-on one interviews. The participants were ESL teachers with a minimum of 5 years teaching adult ELLs. The interviews were recorded and transcribed manually and with the assistance of Google Docs. I conducted data analysis after the interviews had been completely transcribed. I used hand-coding to conduct my analysis. I used methods such as underlining, marginal notes, and highlighting to identify specific words or phrases that stood out from the responses of each question. Research suggested that using this type of standard coding procedure, highlighting, or notes within the margin, put emphasis on features that are important within each response (Johnson et al., 2020).

Definitions

Background knowledge: also known as prior knowledge, has been described as existing knowledge (Lupo et al., 2018).

Cognitive: refers to the conscious processes a learner uses to fix deficits in comprehension (Acosta, 2019).

Direct/Explicit vocabulary instruction: the repeated exposures to words in oral and written contexts (Kamil et al., 2008) (as cited in Williams & Martinez, 2019).

Metacognitive: self-evaluation of learning (van Steensel et al., 2016).

Morphemes: the smallest unit of meaning in a word (Bangs & Binder, 2016).

Vocabulary breadth: the size of vocabulary, how many words are learned, and not how well the words were learned (Dickinson et al., 2019).

Vocabulary depth: how well the learner knows a particular word (Dickinson et al., 2019).

Assumptions

I assumed that the participants were truthful about being trained in using DVI and could differentiate from regular vocabulary instruction, looking up definitions in a dictionary. The basis for this assumption was DVI was widely discussed in the field of second language (L2) learning.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was ESL teachers who taught adult ELLs whose first language was not English. I explored ESL teachers' perspectives about DVI in order to explore the problem of DVI not being used with adult ELLs. Vocabulary development is important for reading. However, not all ESL teachers were the same, nor were their beliefs about effectively teaching vocabulary to adult ELLs. This study was limited to ESL teachers and not bilingual teachers whose focus included teaching English and the

first language of all the students (i.e., Spanish) in the classroom who were learning English in different subject areas (i.e., reading, math, science, etc.). ESL teachers had the experience and knowledge to inform this study because of specific training and resources that were pertinent to adult ELLs. The constructivist framework was appropriate for this study because ESL teachers assist ELLs in constructing knowledge from personal experiences and influences. The transferability is limited due to the small sample size, however, important information about how adult ESL teachers approach vocabulary instruction is an important contribution to the literature.

Limitations

For this study, the participant sample was composed of adult ESL teachers. A possible limitation was sample size. The sample of 11 ESL teachers limited generalizability. To overcome this limitation careful consideration to document and review results was given. An additional limitation was that qualitative studies require more time for data collection. McGrath et al., (2019) stated that the time of interviewees must be considered and to include only the number of participants needed. To address this limitation, I asked each participant if they could commit to the length of time for interviewing for in depth information and to the follow up once the transcripts were complete. I tried to ensure the organization of materials including the recording device, interview protocol, and facility for conducting the interviews. I expected that the participants were truthful and honest during the interview process. I achieved this with credibility and dependability. Stahl and King (2020) reported involving informants in the verification of the researcher's interpretations or member checking for credibility. The

researchers identified dependability as trust and peer debriefing to create that trust. I established credibility by member checking and dependability in the consistency with the collection of data, the analysis, and reporting. There was potential for bias in the coding of the data because I am currently an ESL teacher, with professional interest in the topic. However, I attempted to limit any bias in the findings by carefully using a reflective journal to track all my decisions about the data. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend keeping a research journal during the study to document thoughts or reflections of the interviewing process.

<div style="text-align:center">Significance</div>

The findings from this study are important to the field of ESL education because it provides ESL educators and leaders with some of the current strategies being used in this field. Additionally, it addresses reasons why ESL teachers are not using DVI to improve reading comprehension for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills. Knowing English for adult ELLs means the ability to find better paying jobs, self-sufficiency, access to community services, having a sense of belonging to the community, and confidence to apply for citizenship (Larrotta, 2019). For adult ELLs to become proficient readers, vocabulary knowledge is necessary (Johnston et al., 2016). The research of Subon (2016) supported vocabulary instruction to improve comprehension. The second language learner living in the United States was exposed to many types of written language that must be understood to communicate successfully in the English-speaking world (Acosta, 2019; Barrot, 2016). Adults need English to communicate in this text-based world with employers, a child's teacher, local

government, health industry, household bills, and other types of communication. ELLs have faced many challenges not having the vocabulary to articulate the need for necessities which affected the entire family. Many ELLs suffered physically for the lack of vocabulary knowledge to express need for medical assistance or even legal aid in some circumstances. Using DVI to facilitate better communication could assist ELLs with better job opportunities, continuing education, self-advocacy in medical or legal situations, and socially contributing to their communities. These implications support positive social change and the growth and development of ELLs so they could advance their education, seek citizenship, maintain residency, and stimulate the economy with their financial contributions in the workforce.

Summary

Vocabulary and reading comprehension are connected to language learning. It is possible for vocabulary to assist with reading comprehension in many ways (Moody et al., 2018). To address this issue, I explored ESL teachers' perspectives about DVI to improve reading comprehension for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills. To facilitate the collection of data, I used one-on-one interviews with the participants. The next chapter includes a comprehensive review of research literature that had been conducted using vocabulary as an instructional tool and to enhance reading comprehension. The chapter also includes a discussion of the framework for this study, the role of background knowledge in comprehension as well as reading comprehension.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Providing effective language instruction and improving student comprehension begins with the teacher. It is no different in ESL classrooms. The problem that was investigated is that ESL teachers were not using the strategy DVI in the ESL classroom.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore ESL teachers' perspectives about DVI for adult ELLs in a Midwestern state. In Chapter 2, I present a comprehensive review of literature relevant to the problem. This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I provide the conceptual framework for language learning. The second part is the literature review with a discussion of background knowledge, importance of vocabulary, vocabulary-comprehension relationship, reading comprehension, and the adult learning theory all related to the improvement of reading comprehension for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills.

There are various theories in L2 learning. Some of these theories are the behaviorist perspective, Krashen's monitor model, cognitive perspective, and social cultural perspective (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). These theories are used to support language learning (Mitchell et al., 2013). Brown (2014), a leading researcher in ESL, outlined these theories along with different styles of learning for ELLs and factors that affect language acquisition. Vocabulary is an essential component of language acquisition and can impact other areas of learning (Durgunoglu et al., 2021; Vander Woude, 2016). Vocabulary is also essential for reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Colovic-Markovic, 2017; Vander Woude, 2016; Vincy, 2018). To facilitate these skills, some background knowledge, especially in a specific subject is necessary (Vander

Woude, 2016). Vocabulary and background knowledge enhance reading comprehension

(Harmon & Wood, 2018). Comprehension includes the integration of prior knowledge

(Durgunoglu et al., 2021). When ELLs have more knowledge before reading, it helps

comprehension of what is being read (Lupo et al., 2018). Researchers report that the

primary reason for vocabulary instruction is to enhance reading comprehension for

learners (Harmon & Wood, 2018).

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted the search for literature using the following databases: ERIC, SAGE,

Science Direct, EBSCO, ProQuest, Elsevier, JSTOR, Springer, and Google Scholar.

Some of the search terms I used for the research articles selected were, *adult ELLs* and

reading comprehension or *vocabulary instruction*. An advanced search using the terms

DVI or *direct vocabulary instruction*, *ELLs* or *English language learners*, and *adults*

provided several results. However, many of those results were outdated or unrelated to

this study. In cases where there was little current research, I gave a second look at some

articles that explored ELLs that were children or that explored writing or other skill areas.

I used Google Scholar to find current research (within the last 5-6 years) related to

outdated articles. Each initial search began with Thoreau from the Walden University

library or with Google Scholar. The search led to about 100 results with many citations,

books, or outdated articles I could not use because they were outdated or unrelated to my

research. The articles I used varied in the nature of the study and some used children as

the participant sample.

Conceptual Framework

By the late 20th century (1980s, 1990s, and 2000s) constructivism had become the prevalent theory of learning (Brown, 2014). In the constructivist view, individuals construct their own knowledge based on prior experiences and the focus was on cognitive and social processes in learning (Aljohani, 2017). Although Piaget and Vygotsky were associated with constructivism, their views on learning differed slightly. Piaget was a cognitive constructivist, and his work was grounded in cognitive development and individual construction of knowledge (Aljohani, 2017). Piaget's theory looked at learning as a developmental process involving change, self-generation, and construction as individuals built on previous learning experiences (Aljohani, 2017). Conversely, Vygotsky was a social constructivist. Vygotsky's theory viewed an individual's thinking and meaning as being constructed socially and arising from their social interactions within their community (Aljohani, 2017). Vygotsky inferred that learning occurs through and during interaction in the learner's zone of proximal development (ZPD), which was a metaphorical place in which learners were capable of higher levels of performance because of support from interaction with an interlocutor (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Endogenous constructivism primarily focused on internal and individual constructed knowledge and was known as cognitive constructivism that reflected Piaget's theory (Aljohani, 2017). Central to this theory was the negotiation of meaning of experiences by children or adults that were inconsistent with the existing schema. Dialectical constructivism or social constructivism was centered on the aspect of social interactions that were considered key to the construction of knowledge. This theory

reflected Vygotsky's view of learning (Mitchell et al., 2013). Overall, constructivist theory was concerned with building knowledge. This theory was a good lens for examining the perspectives of ESL teachers and their use of vocabulary to build knowledge to improve comprehension for ELLs.

Literature Review

In this review of literature, I documented ways researchers who have worked with ELLs have approached background knowledge and vocabulary instruction related to reading comprehension. I identified these components in this study with research to support the significance to ESL education and ELLs. Additionally, I have included andragogy, the adult learning theory since this study focuses on adult ELLs.

Background Knowledge or Schemata

Background knowledge, also known as schemata, is important for students of ESL to improve reading comprehension (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018; Dong, 2017). Background knowledge is described as what a person already knows, has, and can access at any given time as needed (Dong, 2017). In some research studies, there was importance and emphasis on background knowledge because students use it to connect old information to new information (Dong, 2017; Shin et al., 2019). The concept of background knowledge builds on students' prior experiences to improve reading comprehension (Shin et al., 2019). Students, especially ELLs, living and experiencing culture also can activate background knowledge while learning to read (Shin et al., 2019). Something ELLs might have experienced in the second language can trigger past information and support new information learned. Real-life authentic experiences are

equally important to ELLs' understanding and comprehension of the second language. These experiences are building blocks to the development, progression, and authentication of the second language. The following studies varied in the examination of background knowledge with ELLs.

Reading comprehension has many dimensions and requires interaction from multiple skills and elements. One of those elements is background knowledge. Background knowledge influences reading comprehension (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018; Shin et al., 2019). As readers continue through an iterative process. In this process, new information is combined with existing information (Shin et al., 2019). The use of background knowledge allows readers to connect actual information from the text with incoming information for the development of the mental representation of the text. When building this mental representation, the construct, background knowledge comes into the picture (Shin et al., 2019). Background knowledge cannot be discussed without mentioning schema. Schema is a mental structure in memory taken from experiences in the past that establish presumptions for an impending occurrence (Shin et al., 2019).

In the research by Al-Jarrah and Ismail (2018), they examined content schema, cultural schema, linguistic schema, and formal schema for reading strategies. After interviewing 10 university students, they found that content schema was viewed as prior knowledge, conceptual knowledge, and situational knowledge. In these areas, the students focused on reading quickly or smoothly, taking notes, and self-evaluation after reading. Cultural schema enhanced the student's awareness to cultural differences as well as cultural knowledge in contextual information. Linguistic schema, associated with

vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, added considerably to reading comprehension with the student's prior linguistic knowledge including phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary. The authors found that students used rhetorical knowledge, structural knowledge, and formal construction for reading strategies (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). These findings are important with ELLs when supporting reading for comprehension. Likewise, Shin et al. (2019) confirmed that providing background knowledge supports comprehension of L2 texts. These authors found that the combination of working memory and background knowledge facilitated reading comprehension in a study with adult learners. Working memory is an important focus in the literature. Joh and Plakans (2017) surveyed participants about working memory in second language reading with the influence of prior knowledge. Eighty college students participated, and their performance was measured using a reading span task. The measures were working memory capacity, prior knowledge, and reading comprehension. These findings that working memory and prior knowledge contributed to L2 reading comprehension confirm the work presented by Shin et al. (2019). Although participants with lower knowledge of specific topics did not benefit from working memory, building topic knowledge was critical. This study was able to shed light on what lower knowledge participants lacked and demonstrated success with L2 learners of higher knowledge and even those with more topic knowledge (Joh & Plakans, 2017).

There are different ways to build background knowledge. One way of building background knowledge is through reading and the examination of text sets (Lupo et al., 2018). In this research study, the authors demonstrated stressors they perceived young

people (middle and high school) experienced with reading in school by using a graphic organizer. This graphic organizer was called the Quad Text Set Framework. The purpose of this set was to use four different types of text. One that was challenging (on or above grade level) and three that built background knowledge and motivation for comprehension of the target text (Lupo et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2017). Some of the stressors that the authors felt impacted a student's reading experience were volume, text difficulty, background knowledge, and motivation. Lupo et al. (2018) discovered in the research that background knowledge influenced students' understanding of reading. Lupo et al. (2018) examined ways to build students' knowledge by reading and incorporating texts focused on building background knowledge into the text sets. Motivation was another factor in creating text sets. Zhang et al. (2017) found that motivation and learning strategies predicted vocabulary knowledge. In their study with 107 10th grade students' data was collected using questionnaires that assessed motivation towards learning English vocabulary and learning strategies in English (Zhang et al., 2017). The findings indicated that the learning strategy somewhat mediated a relationship between motivation and learning vocabulary.

Another way to access background knowledge or prior knowledge is through culture (Dong, 2017; Durgunoglu et al., 2021). Dong (2017) studied the ideas of culturally relevant pedagogy and linguistically responsive teaching bridged together in a theoretical framework. The idea of culturally relevant pedagogy started from disparities among minorities. This idea evolved as an approach to build on student's native cultural knowledge, prior learning, and familiar reference points. Linguistically responsive

teaching was almost an extension of culturally relevant pedagogy. It was complimentary to culturally relevant pedagogy. It supported the academic success of ELLs. In the research study by Dong (2017), teachers used culturally relevant pedagogy and linguistically responsive teaching when teaching ELLs in mainstream subject areas, specifically social studies. When the teachers observed the ELLs, had reading discussions, and analyzed the writings, three teaching strategies were identified. These strategies used by the teachers promoted effective social studies instruction using culturally relevant pedagogy and linguistically responsive teaching. The approaches were: (a) uncovering and connecting prior knowledge of ELLs to social studies content, (b) building on the prior knowledge of ELLs for deeper understanding, and (c) developing ELLs historical thinking skills through historical narrative and perspective comparisons. Using these strategies enabled the teachers to invoke deeper understanding of their students, their background, what they knew, and how well they knew it. For ELLs, background knowledge includes a cultural component. Lack of cultural knowledge can hinder reading comprehension (Durgunoglu et al., 2021). Teachers need to be informed about their students' background, cultural knowledge, etc. to inform instruction and make social studies or any subject matter learning more relevant and meaningful to ELLs (Dong, 2017; Durgunoglu et al., 2021).

Importance of Vocabulary

Vocabulary instruction has been a topic of educational research. Some of the research has investigated vocabulary instruction as it related to first language (L1) learners, second language (L2) learners, and overall success for both in and out of the

classroom (Artieda, 2017). Vocabulary instruction was important for developing basic vocabulary knowledge in different contexts. Teachers were attempting to increase rigor in instruction and engage students in language using new vocabulary (Vander Woude, 2016).

Vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial part in second language learning (Sa'd & Rajabi, 2018; Vander Woude, 2016; Wilkinson, 2017). When ELLs are introduced to new topics, ability does not hinder learning, but a lack of vocabulary (Vander Woude, 2016). The vocabulary input strategies used can determine the success of acquisition (Tilfarlioglu & Sherwani, 2018). In a study by Sa'd and Rajabi (2018), data collected from 145 learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) determined the use of words in effective vocabulary learning strategies. Vocabulary has an overall impact on student success (Vander Woude, 2016). Some researchers advocate for the acquisition of 3,000 to 10,000 words for proficiency in the target language (Wilkinson, 2017). Since vocabulary learning strategies vary, L2 learners try to find the technique most beneficial for them (Hajebi et al., 2018).

Vocabulary can be used strategically in many ways (Hajebi et al., 2018; Tilfarlioglu & Sherwani, 2018). Learner autonomy (LA) is one way of promoting learner independence with control of the learning process and web-based instruction (Hajebi et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2021). Tilfarlioglu and Sherwani (2018) tested students to determine if a relationship existed among learner's autonomy, self-esteem, and vocabulary learning strategies. Using questionnaires to collect data, the authors reported that learner's autonomy and self-esteem contributed to the effective acquisition of vocabulary. With the

advancement in computer technologies, web-based activities have positively influenced L2 vocabulary learning (Hajebi et al., 2018). Xu et al., (2021) found that web-based strategy instruction and textual structure benefitted ELLs and increased reading comprehension respectively.

Vocabulary-Comprehension Relationship

In some research, there is a relationship between comprehension and vocabulary (Bangs & Binder, 2016; Harmon & Wood, 2018; van Steensel et al., 2016). Harmon and Wood (2018) wrote a concept paper that examined the relationship of academic vocabulary and the vocabulary-comprehension relationship, as well as the implications of instruction for learning enhancement. They asserted that academic vocabulary was necessary for disciplined thinking and learning. Academic vocabulary was characterized as technical, content-specific words and academic vocabulary in general. This vocabulary was targeted at K–12 learners and advanced language learners (e.g., ELLs) for development. With the intervention of morphological awareness, Bangs and Binder (2016) affirmed that this type of instruction is important for adult ELLs because of the positive relationship with other skills like vocabulary, spelling, and comprehension. Van Steensel et al. (2016) was able to show the importance of L2 vocabulary for bilingual students' reading comprehension. In this study, van Steensel et al. (2016) analyzed the relationship between word decoding, vocabulary knowledge, meta-cognitive knowledge and reading comprehension for low-achieving adolescents. They examined monolingual and bilingual students. In the findings, bilingual students benefitted more with an increase in vocabulary knowledge than monolingual students (van Steensel et al., 2016).

There is various research in vocabulary intervention (Li & Cummins, 2019; Ponce et al., 2018). Li and Cummins (2019) used text messages to build the acquisition of academic vocabulary for ELLs while Ponce et al. (2018) introduced interactive highlighting to support vocabulary and text comprehension. Both studies used different intervention techniques yet demonstrated a strong relationship between vocabulary and comprehension. Li and Cummins (2019) reported a grave difference among the control group and the treatment group for learning academic vocabulary that was not taught in the intervention, but the participants reported that the intervention assisted them in learning target words and vocabulary in general. Many participants stated that the content of the text messages was beneficial to reading comprehension as well (Li & Cummins, 2019). The use of interactive highlighting proved to be beneficial in vocabulary learning rather than the traditional pre-teaching of vocabulary for students (Ponce et al., 2018).

Explicit vocabulary instruction to improve reading comprehension is relevant to ESL instruction (Alamri & Rogers, 2018; Gallagher et al., 2019; Solati-Dehkordi & Salehi, 2016). Solati-Dehkordi and Salehi (2016) studied the effects of explicit vocabulary instruction on the writing skills and short-term and long-term retention of the L2 learner. The authors focused on the comparison of productive vocabulary knowledge before and after explicit vocabulary instruction and applied to a writing task. These participants had a pre and post instruction writing activity. Once the writings were scored, a comparison of the writing activities was done and correction of vocabulary errors. The findings from this study showed that explicit vocabulary instruction made a way for turning target vocabulary to productive vocabulary with an immediate writing

task that encouraged retention (Solati-Dehkordi & Salehi, 2016). Additional research showed that explicit vocabulary teaching in a text includes word meanings and word-learning strategies (Gallagher et al., 2019). This type of targeted instruction to enhance vocabulary acquisition is beneficial to all students, especially ELLs (Alamri & Rogers, 2018; Gallagher et al., 2019).

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a difficult task for ELLs that needs to be developed and strengthened (Williams & Martinez, 2019; Xu et al., 2021). Williams and Martinez (2019) researched practices to improve language and literacy skills of adolescents by using explicit instruction in the study of words and academic vocabulary while supporting reading comprehension. A method targeted for improving reading comprehension included reading words and vocabulary and support of oral language development (Williams & Martinez, 2019). Graphic organizers like the concept map have been widely used to influence reading comprehension (Davaribina & Asl, 2017). Davaribina and Asl (2017) included 90 participants and examined passages and comprehension questions, with an introduction to concept mapping. The authors found that the integration of concept mapping strategies in the instruction of reading could help with a reading task, therefore supporting retention. The use of concept mapping seemed to involve deeper perception over translation due to the content and the linguistic forms that had a part in understanding the written text (Davaribina & Asl, 2017).

As the population of ELLs continues to grow, it is important to examine effective reading intervention with this group of learners (Meniado, 2016; Rawian et al., 2018;

Snyder et al., 2017). Phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary are relevant components to reading (Meniado, 2016; Snyder et al., 2017). Meniado (2016) investigated the relationship between and among metacognitive reading strategies, reading motivation, and reading comprehension performance. In their study, it was discovered that students used metacognitive reading strategies moderately with academic texts. It could be attributed to lack of familiarity with metacognitive reading strategies that assisted with comprehension or lack of awareness by teachers of the strategies. However, a relationship did exist between the use of metacognitive reading strategies and reading motivation, but not a significant relationship between metacognitive reading strategies and performance in reading comprehension (Meniado, 2016). In the study that was reviewed by Snyder et al. (2017), vocabulary was a common intervention for reading followed by fluency, phonics and comprehension, and phonemic awareness. These authors reviewed existing literature on interventions that influenced effectiveness in reading for ELLs. Although this study reviewed a K–12 student population, the same should be investigated for adult ELLs to ensure their basic English skills in reading are met (Snyder et al., 2017).

Adult Learning Theory in Language Learning

Adult learners are different from children as learners. Adults are faced with a multitude of responsibilities (e.g., family, job, money; Larrotta, 2019). In education, the term *andragogy* is used to describe adult learning and means the act and science of teaching adults (Franco, 2019). This description included reasons why adults learn and how they learn and provides suggestions regarding the best way to teach them.

The term andragogy was introduced early in 19th century Europe. In Germany in 1833, the term andragogy was first introduced by Kapp (Franco, 2019). The meaning of andragogy has Greek origin with "andra" meaning adult and the latter meaning "leader of" (Franco, 2019). An educator by the name of Knowles (2015) brought this term to the United States after being introduced to the term by colleagues in Yugoslavia. Knowles originally organized his ideas about adult learning around the concept of *informed adult education* (Knowles, 2015). However, Knowles later adapted the concept of andragogy and based it on six assumptions of adult learners: (a) need to know, (b) self-concept, (c) experiences, (d) readiness to learn, (e) orientation to learning, and (f) motivation (Franco, 2019). All six assumptions are key to the strategy of DVI as they are used to address the ELLs in the capacity to improve reading comprehension.

Summary

The conceptual framework and adult learning theory supported the ideas of instruction by ESL teachers and learning for adult ELLs. Recognizing how individuals construct knowledge or use experiences, in this case ESL teachers, and how adult ELLs learn impact one another. Vygotsky's constructivist view (Aljohani, 2017) of how an individual constructs knowledge from their social interactions and experiences was relevant to ESL teachers. Understanding how teachers use their experiences to facilitate instruction directly affects how instruction is implemented in the ESL classroom.

The concept of background knowledge or schemata (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018; Dong, 2017; Shin et al., 2019) supported the idea that ELLs should develop and

strengthen language skills and improve comprehension by using what is already known with new information (Shin et al., 2019). The importance of vocabulary has been explored frequently in research (Artieda, 2017; Sa'd & Rajabi, 2018; Wilkinson, 2017) and is an essential part of language learning (Sa'd & Rajabi, 2018). Hence the different uses of vocabulary learning, and teaching strategies (Sa'd & Rajabi, 2018) are methods used to improve comprehension (Harmon & Wood, 2018). The primary purpose of vocabulary instruction is to improve and assist reading comprehension (Harmon & Wood, 2018). It is important for ESL teachers to facilitate vocabulary instruction for ELLs to be able to read and comprehend text (Vander Woude, 2016). Vocabulary plays a crucial role in reading comprehension (Acosta, 2019). ELLs are in ESL classrooms to comprehend the English language. These learners are present to learn effective communication skills to use in the community, children's school, doctor's office, and stores.

The research presented in this literature review represented various approaches teaching ELLs with background knowledge, vocabulary, examination of the relationship between vocabulary and comprehension, and reading comprehension. Although most of the literature reviewed focused on ELLs who were children or adolescents, this study focused on adult ELLs. This study will contribute to the existing body of literature about the use of vocabulary to support comprehension for adult ELLs, but through different strategies like web-based instruction or prior knowledge. Once the strategies are identified to support ELLs, sharing this information with ESL teachers is essential to support their instruction of ELLs. Knowing the perspectives of ESL teachers can prepare

them in effectively addressing the specific needs of the ELLs. Chapter 3 presents the

methodology of this qualitative study in detail.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore ESL teachers'

perspectives about DVI for adult ELLs in a Midwestern state. In this chapter, I present

the methodology that will be used to collect and analyze the data needed to address the

research question developed for this study. The topics included in this chapter are

research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, and issues of

trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

I used a basic qualitative design for this study. The focus of the research question

was on the perspectives of ESL teachers about DVI as a strategy to improve reading

comprehension for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills. To answer this

question, I collected data most efficiently by interviews.

Because quantitative research uses statistical analysis to examine relationships

between variables, it was an inappropriate design for this study. As stated by Hajebi et al.

(2018), a quantitative approach generally uses larger samples to test numerical data.

Variables are used to make comparisons and correlations of relationships between the

variables that are generalized to the whole (Burkholder et al., 2016). Additionally,

quantitative research designs use measurements that are assigned values and labels or

numbers.

Through this study, I explored themes and patterns instead. While I selected a

basic qualitative design, others like grounded theory, phenomenology, and an

ethnography had been considered but determined not suitable. Grounded theory involves researching deeply enough to develop a theory (Burkholder et al., 2016). The focus of this study was to gain insights based on teachers' knowledge of actions and interactions within the classroom. Phenomenology was not appropriate as it examines the meaning and essence of a lived experience of a particular phenomenon for a person or group of people. The focus of an ethnography is on context or culture of a group of people and it was not selected. This type of design describes aspects of a phenomenon in the context of their ethnic or cultural factors. For these reasons, grounded theory, phenomenology, and ethnography were not suitable to answer the research question.

Burkholder et al. (2016) used an example of knowing what reading means to a child to express the in-depth nature of qualitative inquiry and understanding perspectives and experiences in a more meaningful way. I used qualitative inquiry in this study to investigate the perspectives of ESL teachers. This method of research has also been described as personal, flexible, and descriptive (Aspers & Corte, 2019). The characteristics of qualitative research allow the researcher to explore complex world issues in a more meaningful way (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Research that was qualitative was suitable for this study. Qualitative research is common in the discipline of education (Jansem, 2020). Furthermore, this research design has increased in the study of second language (L2) teaching and learning due to its complex nature (Jansem, 2020). Qualitative research has been characterized as holistic, involving the collection of rich data from different sources to acquire depth of understanding from participants, opinions, perspectives, and attitudes (Burkholder et al., 2016).

I used one-on-one interviews in this basic qualitative study with 11 ESL teachers to collect data. In qualitative research the method of collecting data varies. Data can be collected using interviews, observations and fieldwork, or documents (Burkholder et al., 2016). I used one-on-one interviews to find out the participants' (ESL teachers) perspectives about vocabulary instruction. I used an interview protocol (Appendix A) that I created as the tool to collect data from the ESL teachers. When the researcher uses one-on-one interviews, this practice allows for in-depth interviews with open-ended questions and the ability to use probes to extract additional information as needed (Levitt et al., 2018). In this study, I focused on interviewing to investigate the perspectives of ESL teachers about DVI to improve reading comprehension for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills.

Role of the Researcher

My role in this study was as an observer. I did not influence any of the responses by the participants. I read the questions as written in the interview protocol (Appendix A). I was responsible for all aspects of the research process including identification of the study, recruitment of participants, data collection, data analysis, and dissemination of findings. I did not have any personal relationships with the participants. The participants worked in other regions of the state. While I am currently an ESL teacher, I do not work directly with adult ESL teachers. Any potential biases were managed by carefully tracking my procedures for data analysis and conclusion with a reflective journal (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Based on training I received, DVI was the preferred strategy used with my adult ELLs. I did not share this information with participants. There was no

disclosure of the workshops attended that encouraged the use of DVI in the ESL classroom. To help control any bias, I did not comment on anything. I did not make any comments that intentionally reflected my views of DVI. I only reported participant feedback.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

Purposeful sampling for participant recruitment was appropriate for this study. This type of sampling is typical for qualitative research whereas quantitative methods refer to this as nonprobability sampling (Burkholder et al., 2016). I used purposeful sampling because of the criteria for participants. The sample population was intentional, and the participants offered perspectives to best inform this study and the research question. I completed 14 interviews with participants. However, I later determined that three did not meet the inclusion criteria for participation. There were 11 ESL teachers as the sample that met the criteria. The selection criteria were that the ESL teacher had five years' experience and was currently teaching in an adult ESL setting. I sent an email regarding this study to [State] Association of Community and Adult Education (SACAE), an organization affiliated with adult educators. Once disseminated, prospective participants contacted me by email and telephone. After initial contact, I scheduled the interested individuals for an interview that I conducted by Zoom. The small sample size was based on the possibility of collecting rich data, diversity of participants, and the data collection tool used. I determined if sampling needed to continue from the quality of data I collected. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that "saturation occurs when continued

data collection produces no new information or insights into the phenomenon you are studying" (p. 199). In this study, I identified saturation when findings and analysis of participant data rendered no new information. When this occurred, participant sampling ended.

All participants included (N=11) had a minimum of 5 years teaching adult ELLs. The requirement ensured the participants' experience and years working as an ESL teacher to receive professional development. The number of participants I selected was based on research study. In a study conducted by Al-Jarrah and Ismail (2018, fewer participants (10) allowed the researchers to provide depth of analysis and in-depth examination of the reading comprehension strategy under investigation.

Instrumentation

I created an interview protocol (Appendix A) based on a similar protocol. The similar protocol is the one used by Chen et al. (2022) that centered around the effects of teachers and teaching styles. After reviewing a few studies (see Chen, 2022; Cheung & Hennebry-Leung, 2020; & Chou, 2018), that were similar in demographics, nature of study, and type of study I aligned my research questions in a similar way. The interview protocol (Appendix A) consisted of demographic data and questions that addressed the research question. In a study by Kallio et al. (2016) the development of an interview protocol contributed to the trustworthiness of the interview as a method of qualitative research. I used the interview protocol (Appendix A) to collect information from the ESL teachers pertaining to the educational functioning level of the adult ELLs they taught, the

ELLs first language, if the ESL teacher spoke a L2, and questions to address the research question.

In this study, I developed the interview protocol (Appendix A). The interview protocol (Appendix A) was developed based on key aspects drawn from the literature review such as vocabulary and comprehension (Harmon & Wood, 2018). Content validity was partially established with the participants and the experience as ESL teachers along with relative knowledge of DVI. The interview protocol (Appendix A) had sufficient questions to gather information from the participants and to address the research question that asked about ESL teachers' perspectives about DVI as a strategy to improve reading comprehension for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills. This study was the first time that this instrument was implemented. Creswell and Poth (2018) discussed qualitative methods including instrumentation. Therefore, the foundation for the development of the instrument that I used was research on qualitative methods.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (08-10-21-0738490), 11 participants signed the informed consent form providing permission to participate in the study along with intentions of the study and assurance of confidentiality throughout the process. Burkholder et al. (2016) expressed the importance of maintaining confidentiality by concealing identifying information of participants.

I used email as the selection process for participants. I sent an email to SACAE, an organization affiliated with adult education, outlining the purpose of the study in the

informed consent form and process for recruitment. The organization forwarded this communication to their members with the attached informed consent form. Participants responded directly to me by email and phone.

I conducted and recorded the interviews by Zoom to ensure the safety of participants and interviewer because of the presence of COVID 19. I made arrangements either by phone or email with an agreed upon date and time for a Zoom meeting. I collected data during the agreed upon time with participants. The time frame for data collected varied depending on the availability of each participant. Initial data collection occurred during the summer of 2021 while most participants were on summer break and continued through the Fall of 2021 once teachers returned to school. Zoom interviews continued until 11 participants meeting the interview criteria completed the interviewing process. The approximate time for each interview was 60 to 90 minutes. I made a follow-up phone call to each participant to read over the transcript to ensure that my impressions of the responses were accurate. The participants verified that the impressions I had were accurate. I debriefed the participants by phone to exit the study. I asked if there were any questions that were not asked at the time of the interview. I thanked them again for their participation one last time.

Data Analysis Plan

Prior to interviewing, each participant was given a number (e.g., P1, P2, etc.) as a means of identification without using actual names and to ensure confidentiality. Data analysis began after each interview. I checked the printed Zoom transcript against the audio recording and member checking to avoid any discrepancies. Once the second

interview transcript was complete, I compared it to data collected from the first interview transcript. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) referred to this as simultaneous data collection. Using this method, I had the opportunity to reflect, write initial themes, or ideas that needed further investigation. There was no software used in this process. I coded everything by hand.

These were the specific steps to data analysis. The first step was to read each transcript for accuracy and compare it to the audio recording. The second step was to reread each transcript and write specific words or phrases in the margin significant to each interview question. The third step was to take all the codes written in the margin of each transcript and document in a coding journal. The fourth step was to categorize the codes. I used a hand-coding procedure, (i.e., highlighting, marginal notes, etc.) to identify themes and patterns that emerged from the categories identified. The final steps included the creation of a coding table with themes, categories, and codes that were identified in the data collected. I revised the coding table a few times to ensure accuracy and to make sure that all codes were included. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested asking questions when analyzing data. I asked myself, "what is this" or "what does this represent"? As I continued to analyze data, a coding journal-maintained data based on interpretation from common codes identified in the transcripts that were later categorized. Throughout the process, there was continual reflection on what was seen in the data to address the research question. In research, there might be discrepant or negative case analysis. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), when a researcher intentionally looks for data that might challenge the expectations or emerging findings, this strategy is called

negative or discrepant case analysis. A discrepant case in this study was any portion of data that does not fit the patterns that had been identified. There were not any discrepant cases. However, there were three interviews that did not fit the criteria outlined in the interview protocol (Appendix A).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research are the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is the believability of a study. It means that the findings from the data presented are believable. Credibility can be established with strategies like prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, or member checking (Burkholder et al., 2016). Credibility was established in this study by member checking. Member checking offers another means of carefully analyzing the data with participant feedback.

Transferability is associated with external validity in quantitative research. Transferability in qualitative research is the ability to apply the results to other locations based on similarities that may occur between those locations. In a qualitative study, to show that the findings are transferable from one set of interviews to another with a similar setting, there must be thick description (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I achieved transferability by providing thick description of the interview setting, participants, and assumptions of the study. This was important for a person reading the study to be able to understand the reported findings.

Dependability is like reliability in quantitative research. To demonstrate reliability means there is consistency. If an instrument used to collect data produces

consistent results across the occurrence of data collection, then there is reliability (Burkholder et al., 2016). In quantitative research, reliability can be statistically estimated. This does not apply to qualitative research. The evidence of dependability in qualitative research is consistency in data collected, analyzed, and reported (Burkholder et al., 2016). To ensure dependability, I used the same means for data collection for all participants. An audit trail is another means of ensuring dependability with documentation of how data were collected, how categories were identified, and decision making through the research process. Additionally, participants met the same criteria. I analyzed data in the same consistent manner.

Confirmability is the same as objectivity in quantitative research. Burkholder, et al. (2016) stated there is researcher subjectivity in qualitative research. However, the methods must depend on authentic procedures, analyses, and conclusions to establish confirmability. To maintain confirmability, I adhered closely to the interview protocol (Appendix A) while interviewing participants, refrained from interjecting personal comments, and listened attentively. I managed confirmability by an external audit with details of the research process documented in a reflective journal.

Ethical Procedures

To avoid ethical concerns, I provided an informed consent form to all participants prior to interviewing. The nature of this study was educational and did not request any personal information or information that was viewed as socially compromising. I did not have any physical contact with participants. I used an alphanumeric code (e.g., P1, P2, etc.) to identify participants and to protect their identity. I interacted with participants

verbally and with a recording. I obtained the IRB approval (08-10-21-0738490) prior to the start of this study. I provided the materials and resources used in this study. I clearly stated in the informed consent form that participation in this study was on a voluntary basis. I handled the collection of data carefully and saved it electronically on a USB flash drive. The USB flash drive that I used to save all pertinent and confidential information is secured in a locked location. None of the participants withdrew from participation during the interviewing process. I treated data confidentially. I was the only person handling the saved information on the USB flash drive. After analyzing data and all interviews completed, I stored the USB flash drive in a secured and locked location. The information on the USB flash drive will be kept for five years, after which time it will be destroyed.

Summary

In this basic qualitative study, I attempted to answer the research question about the perspectives of ESL teachers about DVI to improve reading comprehension for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills. The rationale for conducting a basic qualitative study was to explore ESL teachers' perspectives about DVI for adult ELLs in a Midwestern state. In the process, I identified themes and patterns after data analysis. I used purposeful sampling to collect data from 11 participants. The participants met specific criteria and were interviewed with Zoom. The interview protocol (Appendix A) I developed was used to gather information on vocabulary instruction, DVI, and reading comprehension.

Furthermore, I provided a clear and concise methodological process while taking into consideration careful protection of the confidentiality of all participants and documentation to ensure trustworthiness in an ethically responsible study. To ensure trustworthiness, I established credibility through member checking. I achieved transferability with thick description of the interview setting and background of participants. With consistent collection and analysis of data, I achieved dependability. I was able to maintain confirmability with close adherence to the interview protocol (Appendix A), refrain from interjection of personal opinions, and attentive listening to participants.

I followed all ethical procedures closely. This included submission of the informed consent to all participants prior to the scheduled interview. The nature of this study did not require any personal information or information that could have been viewed as socially compromising. All participants were adults and able to provide consent on their own. Each participant was assigned the letter 'P' and a number as means of identification (e.g., P1, P2, etc.). There was no face-to-face contact to safeguard against possible COVID 19 transmissions. I saved data electronically on a USB flash drive and secured it in a locked location. It will be stored for the next 5 years and destroyed after that time.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore ESL teachers'

perspectives about DVI for adult ELLs in a Midwestern state. Understanding these

perspectives could assist teachers in effective instruction of vocabulary for ELLs and

comprehension of the English language. This could decrease the need for ELLs using

translators in English speaking environments. The research question was about the

perspectives of ESL teachers about DVI as a strategy to improve reading comprehension

for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills. In this chapter, I present the

setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results,

and a summary.

Setting

The setting for this study was in a Midwestern state. I recruited participants from

10 public school districts located throughout a large Midwestern state. Each school

district had an adult education program for new immigrants and people who did not speak

English. Participants received notification of this study through affiliation with the State

Association of Community and Adult Education (SACAE), a statewide group of

professionals dedicated to educating adult learners. All participants were ESL teachers of

adult students and associated with SACAE. ESL teachers teach English as a second

language which is different from bilingual teachers. Instruction is focused on life skills

and basic English proficiency. It is not necessary for an ESL teacher to know a second

language. ESL teachers may be placed in community settings or K–12 schools

depending on the need identified for adult ELLs. The school districts in the Midwestern

state follow a system for providing services to adult learners. These districts adhere to specific guidelines outlined by the state. Adult ELLs can attend any adult education program and receive the same basic services. Of course, each district or program within a district may vary in instructional techniques and other ancillary services provided.

Demographics

As part of the interview, the ESL teachers provided information regarding their demographic characteristics. To be included in the study, the ESL teachers had to be teaching adults and had to have five years of teaching experience. Their responses are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participant #	Gender	Years Teaching ESL	Native Language of ELL Taught	Level of ELL Taught
1	F	5+	Albanian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Thai, Italian	All levels
2	F	19	Spanish, Arabic	All levels
3	M	11	Spanish, Arabic, Vietnamese, French, Japanese, Portuguese, Chinese	All levels
4	F	12	Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese	Beginning ESL literacy and advanced
5	F	7	Arabic, Spanish, Swahili	Beginning ESL literacy
6	F	18	Spanish, Arabic	All levels
7	F	12	French, Thai, Arabic, Spanish	All levels
8	F	7	Arabic, Spanish	All levels
9	F	10	Arabic, Spanish	Beginning ESL literacy to high intermediate
10	F	12	Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, Italian, Japanese, French, Chinese	Beginning ESL literacy and intermediates
11	M	5	Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin Chinese, Russian	Intermediate and advanced

Of the 11 participants who completed the one-on-one interviews, nine (81.8%) identified their gender as female and two (18.2%) indicated they were male. The number of years of teaching ranged from 5 to 19 years. All teachers were working with adults who spoke various languages. For example, the 11 teachers had Spanish speaking adults in their classes, with 10 teachers indicating they were working with adults who spoke Arabic. Other languages that were listed included French, Portuguese, Japanese, and

Thai. Most teachers were teaching individuals who had varying levels of English literacy, ranging from beginning literacy to advanced.

Data Collection

I recruited participants through a local community organization with information that outlined the purpose of the study in the informed consent form. I was contacted by participants by email to schedule Zoom interviews. A total of 14 participants were identified as ESL teachers. Of this number, 11 met all the inclusion criteria and were included in the study. The remaining three were not used in data collection because they did not meet the inclusion criteria established for the sample. Eleven participants participated in one-on-one interviews that were recorded using Zoom. I transcribed some of the interviews and some were transcribed by Rev.com, a transcription service. Interviews occurred from August 20, 2021, to November 4, 2021, and lasted for approximately 40 to 60 minutes. Every participant responded to the preliminary and interview questions using the interview protocol (Appendix A). The responses provided were personal accounts of their perspectives about DVI, vocabulary instruction, and reading comprehension. The data collection followed the procedure presented in Chapter 3. No unusual circumstances occurred during data collection.

Data Analysis

The process that I used to move from data-driven (inductive) coding to larger representations such as categories and themes was a manual process. Saldaña (2016) recommended manual coding for first-time research studies. The first step in this process was to listen to each recorded interview once the interview was complete. I wanted to

make sure that the responses were clear and there was no interference in the recording.

Next, I began to transcribe the recording. I used a transcription service, Rev.com to

transcribe some of the interviews. This helped expedite the process. The second step was

to print the transcripts. Once the transcripts were all printed and identified with the

participant number (e.g., P1, P2, etc.) and date of the interview, I began to read each

transcript and highlight responses I wanted to revisit. I also wrote notes along the margin

of the page that stood out to me which informed my codes (Saldaña, 2016). I completed

this step for all 11 transcripts. In the third step, I numbered each code in my coding

journal from each transcript being careful not to repeat codes. When this step was

completed, there were a total of 89 codes. An abbreviation was assigned to each

individual code.

During a second cycle of coding, I focused on specific categories and collapsed

some codes that were similar in meaning to codes already identified. This second cycle of

coding ended with a total of 68 codes depicted in Appendix B, seven categories, and four

themes. The codes that emerged were data specifically shared by participants. For

example, Participant 3 stated, "I like to use a lot of vocabulary in context." As such, the

code, context emerged, and I then looked for it in other interviews. Participant 3

explained that the preference is to use vocabulary related to a specific unit, to what is

being worked on in class. Participant 4 also mentioned context, specifically for high

beginners. Other participant responses included phrases coded as context were

Participants 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. Participant 5 said, "I use the vocabulary in context for

whatever unit we are teaching." Participant 6 indicated that vocabulary in context is

always used rather than a list of isolated or unrelated words that are difficult for students to remember. Participant 7 stated, "I think it's better to learn vocabulary in the context of the sentence." Participant 8 related reading comprehension to vocabulary and the vocabulary used in context to help ELLs learn specific words. Another code that was created from the interviews was BE. Burlington English was a digital program used by six participants. Participant 7 indicated using BE a lot and Participant 8 used the reading books offered by Burlington English.

The themes, (a) teachers use a variety of instructional techniques, (b) teachers increased use of technology, (c) teachers lack direct/explicit vocabulary instruction in skill areas, and (d) teachers reported barriers to implementing DVI developed from categories (see Table 2). The categories, types of instruction and visuals came under the theme, teachers use a variety of instructional techniques. The category, digital programs, came under the theme of teachers increased use of technology. The categories of teacher beliefs about DVI and presumptions of DVI came under the theme, teachers lack direct/explicit vocabulary instruction in skill areas. The categories, barriers, and educational functioning level came under the theme of teachers reported barriers to implementing DVI. The themes identified were directly related to the codes taken from the data. The participants revealed a variety of techniques used with adult ELLs to meet the needs of the different skill levels of the learners. Visuals were a category identified by the participants as instrumental in grasping vocabulary. The use of visuals and pictures especially from the student's cultural background is a good way to support vocabulary learning (Gupta, 2019). In this study there were no discrepant cases. Data retrieved

during the interview process were relevant to addressing the research question. The three participants not used in this study could have been discrepant cases because the participants did not meet the criteria for participation in this study.

Trustworthiness

To assure trustworthiness, I followed the procedures for data collection and analysis outlined in Chapter 3. The preparation beforehand included dissemination of the study to recruit participants and having time to set up scheduled interviews which ensured no interruptions from me or participants. Before each interview, I read the interview protocol (Appendix A) so that there was no hesitation on my part when asking the questions and staying on target within the allotted time. Each interview was recorded to capture the responses of each participant verbatim. In this process, I had the opportunity to replay the recordings and check the audio against the typed transcript. In a few instances, the responses were inaudible. I was able to use member checking with those participants to clarify and fill the gaps for data of which I was unsure. According to Burkholder et al. (2016), member checking is more than confirmation of interview transcripts as the researcher's interpretation of the data is verified.

Credibility

Prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, or member checking are just a few ways that credibility can be established (Burkholder et al., 2016). For this study, I used member checking to verify and clarify gaps identified when reading the transcripts. With member checking, I ensured that my interpretations were not reflected in the analysis but were only the participants' perspectives. Furthermore, I

gained a better understanding of the participants' perspectives, and they had the opportunity to elaborate more during this follow up.

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research can be established through reflexivity, thick description, and maximum variation (Burkholder et al., 2016). In this study, I used purposeful sampling which enhanced the transferability of this research by ensuring the informants which had the most expertise about the problem. I used purposeful sampling because of the criteria established for participant participation. The criteria for participants having taught ESL to adult ELLs for at least 5 years supported transferability along with the thick description obtained from the perspectives of ESL teachers. Detailed descriptions of the findings are included in the results. Information regarding participant recruitment, data collection and analysis have been provided for anyone interested in replicating the research. The information provided supports future researchers interested in developing studies with similar topics using the gaps and limitations.

Dependability

Burkholder et al. (2016) viewed dependability like reliability in quantitative research. It can be established with audit trails and triangulation. For this study, an audit trail detailing the consistency in the collection of data, analysis, and findings ensured dependability. The data collection log (Table 2) that carefully documents efforts to recruit participants and dates participants were interviewed, supports dependability. The audit trail for this study is included so it can be used by future researchers who want to replicate this study.

Table 2

Coding Table: Themes and Categories from ESL Teachers

Themes	Categories	Examples of Codes
(1) Teachers use a Variety of Instructional Techniques	Types of Instruction	Translation, Definition, Tongue and Mouth, and Scaffolding
	Visuals	Video Learning, Demonstration/Role Play
(2) Teachers increased use of Technology	Digital Programs	Google Translate, Kahoot, Easy English News, and Zoom
(3) Teachers lack direct/explicit vocabulary instruction in skill areas	Teacher beliefs about DVI	Very Important/Value, Focus on Adults, Personal Experience
	Presumptions of DVI	Terms Unknown, Need More Information
(4) Teachers reported barriers to implementing DVI	Barriers	Random Attendance, Physical Challenge,
	Educational Functioning Level	Fluency, Vocabulary Level

*All abbreviations and full list of codes are in Appendix B

Confirmability

Confirmability for this study included subjectivity as discussed by Burkholder et al. (2016). To ensure confirmability, I followed the interview protocol (Appendix A), recording each participant verbatim and transcribed using Rev.com or myself. When questioned by a participant, I politely declined a response and continued to listen attentively. To further support confirmability, I kept a reflective journal with details of the research process.

<p align="center">**Findings**</p>

I developed one overarching research question for this study. The question was: what are the perspectives of ESL teachers about DVI as a strategy to improve reading comprehension for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills? The findings I presented in this section are aligned with the research question. The codes I identified developed into categories. Themes emerged from the categories that informed the research question: (a) teachers use a variety of instructional techniques, (b) teachers increased use of technology, (c) teachers lack direct/explicit vocabulary instruction in skill areas, and (d) teachers reported barriers to implementing DVI.

Theme 1: Teachers Use a Variety of Instructional Techniques

Theme 1, teachers use a variety of instructional techniques, encompasses the categories, types of instruction and visuals. During the interview process, I asked participants about the types of vocabulary strategies used. The term strategies, that I used on the interview protocol (Appendix A) and throughout this study, has the same meaning as techniques. Theme 1 encompasses the categories, types of instruction, and visuals.

The first category, types of instruction, represented strategies ESL teachers used routinely with ELLs to teach vocabulary. Although there were 36 codes in this category, basic grammar, background knowledge, repetition and contextualization were common codes reported among participants. Participants 2, 4, and 10 provided examples of basic grammar when they reported using prefixes and suffixes to teach word meanings and make comparisons. Participant 2 stated, "I started teaching them prefixes, suffix, I try to show them comparable word structures." Participant 4 stated, "we'll look at root words, prefixes, suffixes, part of speech, context, synonyms, antonyms, and similar words." From the second category, visuals, the codes video learning and demonstration or role play were identified. The code, demonstration, included pictures and graphic organizers which were mentioned repeatedly by Participants 4, 5, 6, 9, and 10. Participant 6 stated, "I also use word clusters or webs, all types of graphic organizers." These visual constructions assisted participants in teaching a word or concept to students. Participant 10 reported that pictures make learning vocabulary more relatable to the student's lifestyle. The use of pictures by Participant 4 was to accommodate the lower-level students. Another representation of the code, demonstration were games used by Participants 4, 8, and 10.

Although none of the participants reported using DVI specifically, the data showed evidence of examples of background knowledge and contextualization which were examples of DVI and if used repeatedly in oral and written contexts, basic grammar and the codes identified under visuals also represent DVI. Theme 1, teachers use a variety of instructional techniques, informs the research question by providing specific types of

instruction that demonstrate the concept of DVI. All the codes identified in the category, types of instruction, represented ways to improve reading comprehension for ELLs with limited English and literacy skills.

Theme 2: Teachers Increased Use of Technology

Technology has continued to develop and expand in the field of ESL. Theme 2, teachers increased use of technology is a testament to this. This theme emerged from the category, digital programs. The codes for this category developed when participants responded to Interview Question 5 about digital programs used and how they pertained to vocabulary instruction. In the category, digital programs, 10 codes had been identified. The codes for this category included Google Translate, Kahoot, Easy English News, Zoom, Flipgrid, Quizlet, IXL, Free Rice, Side by Side, and Burlington English. These codes each represent technology that informants reported using or otherwise discussed.

Burlington English, and online program, was a top response to Interview Question 5. Six of the 11 participants stated that Burlington English was used with their ELLs. This program aligns with the comprehensive, standards-based, curriculum required in ESL classrooms and for English language acquisition. Burlington English caters to diverse first language backgrounds with extensive lessons including civics education. Google Translate and Kahoot were two additional popular digital programs mentioned. The other digital programs mentioned targeted vocabulary independently or in a contextual manner. Participants 1, 3, 5, and 6 used Google Translate because it provided translations for vocabulary exercises. Participant 1 reported that Google sometimes provides the definition, it is good for words that are hard to explain, and the student can

see the "pronunciation." Kahoot used by Participants 2, 5, and 9 was a game-based

learning program that incorporated games or trivia quizzes and used pictures to represent

words.

> "For example, when we were doing articles and any, any kind of grammar
>
> structure as well, we will practice with those because it's really eye opening for
>
> them to see what they're missing and not missing. And I didn't think they would
>
> like the whole game competition part of it, but they actually do. But it's also a
>
> good test for them. And they can play Kahoot at their home as well."

Participant 2 mentioned that this program works well and could be used with their kids

for learning English also.

The program IXL used by Participants 5, 7, and 8 emphasized pronunciation of

the target vocabulary, written usage by students, and reading passages. Participant 8

described IXL, "It's a very good one. They have games on there and they have digital

videos where they listen to the video, they watch the video, it's in captions, and then it

asks them questions." IXL allowed students the ability to interact with the vocabulary in

diverse ways. Participant 11 liked Side by Side. This text engaged students in a digital

component that targeted specific vocabulary for the ELLs with different thematic units.

With the increased use of technology by ESL teachers, digital programs provide a

creative form of instruction while teaching vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, and

other concepts for ELLs. Theme 2, teacher increased use of technology, informs the

research question by providing a non-traditional way of teaching DVI to improve reading

comprehension.

Theme 3: Teachers Lack Direct/Explicit Vocabulary Instruction in Skill Areas

Direct/explicit vocabulary instruction is the repeated exposure to words in oral and written contexts (Williams & Martinez, 2019). It is a vocabulary strategy in ESL education that has been presented in research, trainings, workshops, and professional development opportunities. Theme 3, teachers lack direct/explicit vocabulary instruction in skill areas was developed from two categories: teacher beliefs about DVI and presumptions of DVI. In the category, teacher beliefs about DVI, there were six codes. The codes included very important/value, focus on adults, enhance teaching skills, personal experience, foundation, and practice. Of the words/phrases within the six codes, half were reported by multiple participants. Six participants reported beliefs about DVI as being important or valued. When asked about her thoughts on DVI and if it differed from vocabulary instruction, Participant 1 responded, "I don't know if I understand this very good". I elaborated for her and used the word, explicit, which made the question easier to understand. Participant 1 was then able to report that it was important and felt that it was necessary to stop and explain unknown vocabulary to ELLs rather than coming back to it later. Participant 3 had a similar response and stated, "They need to sometimes have that direct knowledge, that direct instruction for it. So, I think it's important to really help them kind of differentiate between different ones, different strategies, but the direct method is definitely valuable." Personal experience and practice were two codes reported by four participants under teachers' beliefs about DVI. When talking about instruction in the classroom, Participant 2 said, "you want to practice what you learned." This allows students to build on what they have learned over time.

In the category, presumptions of DVI, there were five codes. The codes included terms unknown, need more information, description, guided instruction, and pre-teach/pre-plan. These codes developed from questioning the participants about DVI and if it differed from vocabulary instruction. For example, Participant 5 first responded that the term was unknown to her. Participant 6 thought that both types of instruction worked about the same with some difference. She went on to say that "I think students work more independently" when describing vocabulary instruction, and the use of DVI as needing more guidance. Although Participant 1 felt that she needed more information on DVI, she tried to address the concept.

Theme 3, teachers lack direct/explicit vocabulary instruction in skill areas, informs the research question by demonstrating the exact perspectives of DVI by ESL teachers. From the data collected, there appeared to be limited understanding of the concept among the participants. This limited understanding left participants speculating about the strategy and how it should be used with ELLs. Participant 8 believed that DVI was verbatim instruction. She described the difference in DVI and vocabulary instruction as the former being part of speech identification (i.e., noun) and the latter "would be learning how to apply it and use it." Participant 10 reported "DVI controversial for adult learners." She also thought that DVI "limits the student's ability to expand their vocabulary." Participant 11 was not sure of any difference between DVI and vocabulary instruction and because of her unfamiliarity did not feel she could adequately address the question.

When the participants were asked if DVI differed from vocabulary instruction, nine of the 11 participants said they were different. Some of the differences were described as DVI being memorization, it could be useful for lower-level learners, it included guidance, or it was a prepared story. However, Participant 3 was the only one that reported no difference in the strategies, "I think that both can be integrated and used for teaching vocabulary." Although some participants lacked a clear concept of DVI, the depth of vocabulary strategies implemented by the participants influenced reading comprehension which also supports the research question.

Theme 4: Teachers Reported Barriers to Implementing DVI

Theme 4, teachers reported barriers to implementing DVI, emerged from two categories: barriers and educational functioning level. The barriers category was identified by the codes, random attendance, physical challenge, conflicting, time, and lack of participation. Although the codes for barriers were reported from only four participants, the data included significant mentions of these barriers. For Participant 2, random attendance, physical challenge (lack of in person interaction) and time were barriers to instruction with ELLs. Prior to Covid-19, the students were not consistently in the classroom. Later because of Covid-19 restrictions, there was no face-to-face interaction. Participant 2 said, "to me a classroom is about being interactive and that's what they need is that interaction in English." Participant 2 did not want a classroom that was structured. She did not want a traditional classroom with a lesson strictly followed and no opportunity for flexibility because of inconsistency with student attendance. This participant used a book with short chapters and selected about a dozen words that the

students could get through quickly. Participant 2 stated, "if I have enough people in the class where I know we can use the book and to make some progress in the book, we do that." Participants 2 and 8 identified time as a barrier. Participant 2 expressed those students are not forced to learn a specific number of words by the end of the year, stating that, "You're going to learn what you need to learn in the time you need to learn it." Participant 8 expressed those students need time to read and comprehend. Participant 8 stated that reading helps when the student can read at their own pace and examine the sentence structure and what is being told through context.

The second category, educational functioning level, included the codes of fluency, vocabulary level, advancement, and progress. These codes emerged from participants discussing ELLs making progress in learning, advancing in testing, developing fluency with a higher vocabulary level and comprehension. Only Participants 2, 3, and 5 addressed these barriers to implementing DVI. Participant 5 stated, "it's just like all students if they can read what you would call fluently, but some of them, but they won't understand what they read." Participant 3 reported, "The more or the higher the vocabulary level the student has, the more fluent they are with reading and comprehending what they're reading." Advancement was a barrier reported by Participant 2. She said that ELLs are not graded. "They don't move up levels in terms of, you know there's no tests at the end of the year other than the fact that they take Casas. Because our funding is based on how they progress through the levels in Casas." Participant 2 reported that the ELLs in her class had not taken a test on anything, outside of the standardized Casas test.

Theme 4, teachers reported barriers to implementing DVI, reflects the perspectives from participants regarding barriers to implementation of DVI and the educational functioning level of ELLs. When teachers have not been trained in using a specific strategy or when students randomly attend class, teachers are not demonstrating their full potential and the learners are missing the opportunity to enhance the learning experience. Although data were indirectly related to DVI, this theme informed the research question by providing the reasons for lack of implementation of DVI.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore ESL teachers' perspectives about DVI for adult ELLs in a Midwestern state. In this chapter, I provided details for the research design and rationale, my role as the researcher, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, and data analysis. The participants in this study shared their perspectives about vocabulary instruction, DVI, and reading comprehension. The one-on-one interviews conducted obtained data from 11 participants with varying experience teaching adult ELLs at different skill levels. What are the perspectives of ESL teachers about DVI as a strategy to improve reading comprehension for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills? This is the research question that guided this study.

The participants' responses reflected their experiences as teachers and the interview questions. Most participants were able to address each interview question. In Interview Questions 1-3 all participants agreed that vocabulary instruction was important, valued, and the foundation for reading comprehension. The vocabulary strategies used

varied, but there were some commonalities. All participants reported oral pronunciation, write big letters, prefixes/suffixes, synonyms/antonyms, pictures/graphic organizers, and games as vocabulary strategies used in the ESL classroom. When teaching reading comprehension, participants "pulled-out" vocabulary, used it contextually, and used graphic organizers to create a visual of the vocabulary. All participants used digital programs in instruction. The most popular and widely used digital program was Burlington English. Google Translate and Kahoot were also popular and free programs. The others mentioned were either free or had been recommended as helpful for ELLs.

When asked about what was learned from professional development seminars, conferences, and trainings, nine of the 11 participants were able to share what they learned. From the other two participants, one had not been to any professional development seminars or conferences and the other did not remember. The participants explicitly answered the research question based on their knowledge of the strategy or lack of knowledge regarding the strategy. DVI was described as memorization, verbatim, controversial, effective, requiring guidance, direct knowledge, necessary, and pulling-out words. Of the 11 participants, nine stated there was a difference between DVI and vocabulary instruction.

All participants provided rich descriptions of the vocabulary strategies used with their ELLs as well as digital programs used. Technology was a part of instruction for each participant. As evidenced by the lack of knowledge about DVI, there could be opportunities for ESL teachers to gain more knowledge in this area. To further strengthen this awareness, ESL teachers could expand on strategies mentioned that mirror the

definition used in this study to support reading comprehension for adult ELLs. Chapter 5 will present an interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore ESL teachers' perspectives about DVI for adult ELLs in a Midwestern state. For individuals to understand these perspectives, they could assist teachers in effective instruction of vocabulary for ELLs and their comprehension of the English language. This would decrease the need for ELLs using translators in English speaking environments. What are the perspectives of ESL teachers about DVI as a strategy to improve reading comprehension for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills? This was the research question in this study. Participants for this study consisted of 11 ESL teachers with at least five years of teaching experience with adult ELLs. For this study, I designed a basic qualitative inquiry that allowed me to capture the perspectives of the participants in this study. To guide this study, I used Vygotsky's constructivist view.

The findings were that ESL teachers lacked knowledge about DVI although it was being used in the vocabulary strategies described and the digital programs used with their adult ELLs. The teachers were clear about specific vocabulary strategies and digital programs as described in their responses to Interview Questions 3, 4, 5, and 8. In this chapter, I present the interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications for social change and the conclusion.

Interpretation of the Findings

ESL teachers often have multilevel classes of adult learners. The adult ELLs enroll in ESL programs with varying levels of education in their native language. A challenge for ESL teachers is to provide effective instruction to students in a multi-level

class. For ELLs, the process to build vocabulary knowledge is demanding (Gupta, 2019). Therefore, ESL teachers' perspectives about DVI to improve reading comprehension for adult ELLs with limited English and literacy skills was the focus of this study.

In this study, participants shared their experiences with the type of vocabulary strategies used. Although the participants were from various parts of a Midwestern state, their responses were similar. All participants agreed that vocabulary was important to reading comprehension, but how the vocabulary was taught to support comprehension varied. There were many favorable responses to digital programs being used with a few repeated among participants. The participants expressed doubt, confusion, and lack of knowledge when questioned about DVI and how it differed from vocabulary instruction. There was uncertainty with Interview Question 8 about current strategies used to support reading comprehension. Participants did not know or were not able to articulate if the strategies were DVI, vocabulary instruction, or if one was better than the other.

Background Knowledge or Schemata

Background knowledge, also known as schemata, is important for students of ESL to improve reading comprehension (AL-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018; Dong, 2017). Background knowledge is what a person already knows, has, and can access at any given time as needed (Dong, 2017). Background knowledge was the response by Participant 3 when asked about vocabulary strategies used to teach reading comprehension from Interview Question 4. This finding is consistent with research. Participant 3 stated that she used the vocabulary in context and connected it to the student's prior knowledge. Participant 3 questioned her students about the meaning of a word and asked, "what do

you think it might mean?" She stated that she tried to get them to relate other vocabulary to what they know, "so linking to prior knowledge basically." Participants 3 and 6 both stated prior knowledge as current strategies being used in response to Interview Question 8. Participant 6 stated that the activation of prior knowledge was important and believed that "everyone does it at the beginning of the lesson." In a study conducted by Dong (2017), there was an examination of prior knowledge linked to social studies. Dong (2017) identified building on ELLs prior knowledge for deeper understanding as one of the strategies used by the teacher candidates to enhance social studies instruction. In a research study by Shin et al. (2019) working memory and background knowledge were combined to facilitate L2 reading comprehension in texts with and without pertinent background knowledge. The results were that L2 readers with higher working memory benefited more from background knowledge.

Importance of Vocabulary

Study participants expressed their views about the importance of vocabulary instruction. All participants recognized that without vocabulary, there was no comprehension. Engku Ibrahim et al. (2016) said vocabulary size is important to improve reading comprehension. Participants' responses to Interview Question 2 aligned with research. Participant 3 stated that vocabulary was "very important" to reading comprehension. Participant 4 said, "it's impossible to comprehend something if you have giant holes like Swiss cheese in a text." Participant 5 felt that vocabulary should be used in all domains: reading, speaking, writing, and listening. Participant 6 said, "without vocabulary, you can't comprehend text." Comments like these confirm what research is

saying about vocabulary instruction. Vander Woude (2016) expressed "solid vocabulary instruction can help ELLs reveal the knowledge and potential they possess by supporting their reading comprehension" (p. 19). Other researchers like Harmon and Wood (2018), expressed the primary purpose of vocabulary instruction is to support reading comprehension. Vocabulary learning has even been linked to texting as in the study from Li and Cummins (2019). This study showed significant learning gains of target words through texting. The response from Participant 10 was aligned to the study by Li and Cummins (2019). Participant 10 felt that vocabulary instruction should "focus on life skills, be relatable, and down to earth." Participants 7 and 8 believed that learning words in context was important to reading comprehension. Participants 9 and 11 stated that it was important to know vocabulary, it helps to increase comprehension, and it should be pre-taught before a reading passage. The findings showed all participants had similar responses and recognized the importance of vocabulary to reading comprehension as found in research.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a receptive skill (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). Reading has been described as the most significant source for information and the key to success in educational environments (Davaribina & Asl, 2017). Most participants shared their perspectives about reading comprehension in response to Interview Question 8. When asked about current strategies being used to support reading comprehension, Participant 2 did not have a specific strategy but used Krashen's Input Hypothesis (Mitchell et al., 2013) model. This model identifies the learner's competence as i and for comprehensible

input i + 1 is needed. She also stated that she used a picture dictionary that is organized by topics to teach vocabulary. The pictures provide meaning to the words being learned. The other participants varied in their current strategies. Participants 3, 6, and 10 used prior knowledge as current strategies. Participant 4 relied on word parts and repetition. Participant 5 used a strategy called, 'Think/Pair/Share'. Participant 7 used articles followed by questions to check for comprehension. Akin to Participant 7 was the short stories that Participant 9 used with her students and the informative articles about current events used by Participant 10. Participant 8 used the digital platform Burlington English as the current strategy. The second part to Interview Question 8 if the strategies are not DVI, do you believe these are better than vocabulary instruction? Participant 1 was unsure of how to answer this question and Participant 14 admitted that he needed to improve in this area. Although the findings to the current strategies being used varied, research supports a wide range of word teaching strategies (Dixon et al., 2020).

Interpretation of Findings and Conceptual Framework

The findings in this study aligned with the constructivist view by Vygotsky (Aljohani, 2017). Vygotsky was a social constructivist and viewed an individual's thinking and meaning as being constructed socially and arising from their social interactions within their community (Aljohani, 2017). In this study, ESL teachers were accessing knowledge from personal experiences with questions about different strategies used with ELLs. Like cognitive constructivism, emphasis is on learners constructing their own representation of reality (Brown, 2014). Participants in this study, constructed a view or perception of DVI. There was uncertainty about DVI, but a wide variety of

instructional techniques including visuals, digital programs, beliefs, and presumptions of DVI provided a strong development of vocabulary with support to improve comprehension among adult ELLs. The ESL teachers reported the use of what they believed to be DVI based on prior knowledge or experience, and it was incorporated in class instruction. When teachers build on the students' use of prior knowledge and current knowledge, it influences which details the students find relevant (Lupo et al., 2018). Along with the many instructional techniques shared by the ESL teachers was the use of technology. Xu et al. (2021) reported technology use to support vocabulary and comprehension. A common finding by the ESL teachers showed that the development in vocabulary knowledge assisted ELLs with the ability to construct meaning on their own. This finding is consistent with studies by Vander Woude (2016) and Wilkinson (2017). The teachers used experiences they had in trainings about the topic, what they had heard about DVI, or simply guessing what this concept was all about to formulate meaning for their reality. Although many of the participants were not knowledgeable about DVI, the interview questions increased their awareness about this strategy. I was asked by two participants about DVI and another stated that they would find out more information about it. The data collected were strategies implemented in the ESL classroom that had been used by ESL teachers because of familiarity, training, or proven to be successful with improving reading comprehension.

The adult learning theory, andragogy, suggests that adults as learners are different from children. (Knowles, 2015). Adults have more responsibilities which affects their learning. Knowles (2015) adapted the concept of andragogy, the act and science of

teaching adults, based on six assumptions of adult learners. These assumptions: (a) need to know, (b) self-concept, (c) experiences, (d) readiness to learn, (e) orientation to learning, and (f) motivation are key to successful implementation of DVI with adult ELLs. There was a relationship between these assumptions and what was reported by the participants about the ELLs in the implementation of instruction. For example, ELLs were self-motivated if the information presented was at their level of functioning, interesting, or could be activated by prior knowledge. When learning English, ELLs want to know why they need to learn something and what purpose will it serve in their daily lives. This level of inquiry aligns with the assumption by Knowles (2015) of need to know. P2 stated that the ELLs need "day to day English." The assumption, readiness to learn, was demonstrated when ELLs attended class. Although there was a barrier of random attendance, reported by one participant, most of the ESL teachers reported that students were present and receptive to diverse instructional techniques.

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore ESL teachers' perspectives about DVI for adult ELLs in a Midwestern state. After sharing the informed consent form for individuals to participate in this study, calling districts to get teacher participation, and following-up with possible participants, I conducted a total of 14 interviews. I included only 11 interviews because three participants did not meet all criteria. The three participants that were not included did not meet the criteria for participation because of position as an administrator and grade level taught with ELLs. Interviewing began during the summer months when teachers were away from their

classrooms. For this reason, it was difficult to get teachers to participate. In any future study, I would take into consideration the time frame of conducting interviews during holidays and seasonal breaks because there could have been more participant participation rendering more data.

The criteria for participation were another limitation. For any future study, I would consider extending criteria participation to any ESL teacher. One of the prospective participants was teaching children in their current ESL position, the other taught high school ESL students, and the third participant had taught adult ELLs, but was an administrator in their current position.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future research include other populations of ELLs (i.e., children) and not just adult ELLs. Research should be expanded to former ESL teachers that may be in an administrative position but have taught ELLs at some time in their career. Administrators have the knowledge as former teachers and advanced administrative experience to support this type of research. This population of teachers could add valuable knowledge and experience through their perspectives of DVI.

Another recommendation would be to include bilingual teachers. Although these teachers instruct students in the target language and the student's native language, the strategy of DVI is not limited to one set of learners. Vocabulary is a predictor of listening and reading for all learners (Dixon et al., 2020).

Implications

Positive Social Change

From this study, there was diverse instruction implemented in the ESL classroom. Teachers are using a variety of instructional techniques along with digital programs to support vocabulary instruction and improve reading comprehension. From data collected, ESL teachers are not certain of the definition of DVI, but their practices demonstrate characteristics of DVI while supporting reading comprehension.

Informing adult ESL teachers about the strategy of DVI and other strategies shared in this research can support positive social change. With this information, ESL teachers will be able to provide a different approach to teaching vocabulary. When ELLs have vocabulary proficiency, they are more confident. This confidence enables ELLs to participate in their children's education, the community, and overall environment. The population of ELLs continues to grow across the country. There was an increase of English learners from 9.2 % to 10.4 % from 2010 to 2019 in the public schools across the United States (NCES, 2022). This growth indicates the need for ESL programs. With ESL programs is the need for qualified ESL teachers who are trained in various strategies to implement effective vocabulary practices to increase communication and comprehension among these non-native English speakers. When ESL teachers learn how to implement DVI, they can teach it more successfully to ELLs. When ELLs increase vocabulary knowledge, they improve comprehension inside and outside of the classroom.

Conclusions

DVI is a strategy used in ESL education. Learning about the perspectives of ESL

teachers regarding this strategy is important. When ESL teachers are trained and

equipped with the appropriate skills and techniques to facilitate instruction, ELLs benefit

both educationally and personally. The information in this basic qualitative study

provided data to support ESL teachers in implementing strategically direct instruction to

support adult ELLs in vocabulary instruction to improve reading comprehension. I

wanted to explore ESL teachers' perspectives about DVI for adult ELLs in a Midwestern

state. I found that all ESL teachers used a variety of instructional techniques to teach their

ELLs. Instruction included digital, visual, and tactile learning. Even though most

participants were unaware of exactly what DVI was, nonetheless, all the teachers reported

using characteristics of DVI in teaching their adult ELLs.

Finally, ESL teachers teaching adults has increased considerably. The percentage

of public-school students identified as English learners was higher in 2019 (10.4%)

compared to 2010 (9.2%) (NCES, 2020). If adult ESL teachers were more specifically

trained to be aware of and implement DVI strategies, the literature suggests that explicit

instruction helps with learning academic vocabulary and more effective in retention

(Alamri & Rogers, 2018; Chou, 2018). The need for qualified ESL teachers is evident

with this increase and programs to support English language proficiency are needed.

Information in this study could potentially provide ESL teachers with additional

knowledge and encourage further research for ongoing training and resources to facilitate

the best instruction possible to ensure the growth and development of ELLs to prosper in

English language environments.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Preliminary Questions:

1. How long have you been teaching ESL?

2. What educational level do you teach?

3. What is the native language(s) of the ELLs you teach?

4. Please indicate all the languages you speak.

Interview Questions:

1. How do you use vocabulary in the ESL classroom?

2. What are your beliefs about vocabulary instruction as it relates to reading comprehension?

3. What types of vocabulary strategies do you use?

4. How do you use the above-mentioned vocabulary strategies to teach reading comprehension?

5. What digital programs are used in the classroom? How do they pertain to vocabulary instruction?

6. What have you learned about vocabulary instruction for ELLs from professional development seminars, conferences, and trainings? How do you apply what you have learned?

7. What are your thoughts about direct vocabulary instruction? Does it differ from vocabulary instruction?

8. What strategies are you currently using with ELLs to support reading

comprehension? If they are not direct vocabulary instruction, do you believe

these are better than direct vocabulary instruction?

9. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix B: Key to Codes

Code	Translation	Code	Translation
Simp.	Simplicity		
Trans.	Translation	Pre-T/P	Pre-Teach/Pre-Plan
Def.	Definition	Sum.	Summary
T & M	Tongue and Mouth	PA	Pay Attention
Scaff.	Scaffolding	Disc.	Discovery
BG	Basic Grammar	TI	Theorist Impact
RLT	Real Life Topics	Comm.	Communication
BGK	Background Knowledge	DL	Diverse Learners
WO	Word Order	Intg.	Integrate
Mem.	Memorization	Rel.	Relationships
Rep.	Repetition	Flex.	Flexibility
WW	Word Web	CT	Critical Thinking
Context.	Contextualization/Contextual	Aware.	Awareness/Cultural
POS	Parts of Speech	POT	Power of Transfer
BP	Best Practices	Comp.	Comprehension
Script.	Scripted	Var.	Variety
Diff. Learn.	Differential Learning	NI	New Information
Vid. Learn	Video Learning	Ran. Att.	Random Attendance
Demo./RP	Demonstration/Role Play	PC	Physical Challenge
GT	Google Translate	Conflict.	Conflicting
Kaht.	Kahoot	T	Time
EEN	Easy English News	LOP	Lack of Participation
Zoom	Zoom	Int.	Interactive
Flip.	Flipgrid	Auto.	Autonomy
Quiz.	Quizlet	Pro.	Progress
IXL	IXL	Flu.	Fluency
FR	Free Rice	Voc. Lev.	Vocabulary level
SbyS	Side by Side	Adv.	Advancement

TU	Terms Unknown	VI/V	Very Important/Value
NMI	Need More Information	FOA	Focus on Adults
Descript.	Description	ETS	Enhance Teaching Skills
GI	Guided Instruction	PE	Personal Experience
Found.	Foundation	BE	Burlington English
Pract.	Practice	Conn.	Connections