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Core Subject Area Vocabulary Instructional Strategies for Middle School English Language Learners

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
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MA, Winston-Salem State University, 2010

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Abstract

Academic vocabulary is one of the most important skills needed in language learning, but it may be difficult for students whose native language is not English. The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate how classroom core subject teachers at Middle School 55 (pseudonym) perceive their ability to implement specific instructional model strategies to support explicit academic vocabulary building for ELL students. This study was grounded in Becker and Engelmann's direct instruction framework for effective and efficient teaching and involved providing research-based principles for teachers supporting ELLs in middle school who are developing academic vocabulary skills. Open-ended semistructured interviews were used to collect data about strategies being implemented by teachers at Middle School 55 to support the academic vocabulary and language development of ELL students in their classrooms. Twelve sixth through eighth-grade teachers who teach ELL students participated in this study. Data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed for emerging themes which included teachers' beliefs in their need to support scaffolding instruction and guided practice to support academic vocabulary building for ELLs and professional development and training. Findings show there is a need for teachers to have more professional development to gain useful and effective strategies and instruction for vocabulary development. The results from this study may contribute to positive social change by helping middle school teachers develop a link between academic and content-specific and evidence-based practices that will increase ELL students' academic vocabulary acquisition skills.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my mother and father, Roger and Shirley Waller. They both believed in me and my ability to do remarkable things. Although they were my inspiration to pursue my doctoral degree, they were unable to see my graduation. This is for them. Thank you to my doctorate chair, who guided me in this process, and the committee who supported me as well.

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Section 1: The Problem

The implicit goal for American English Language Learners (ELLs) is building academic vocabulary and fluency in academic and social contexts. Developing academic vocabulary skills is essential for language learning (Chen et al., 2021); however, ELLs continue to struggle with content area academic vocabulary acquisition (Ferlazzo & Sypnieski, 2018). Students must understand the core components of vocabulary and develop effective strategies, especially for technical academic vocabulary (Faraj & Kiliç, 2018). As they acquire language, ELL students may transition through five stages, from a preproduction silent period to performing with proficiency in their content area classes (Paradis, 2016). According to Malone (2018), the language success of ELL students ultimately depends on effective instruction for academic vocabulary acquisition, which requires language learners to be able to make connections between academic and content-specific academic vocabulary words.

Additionally, Hunt and Feng (2016) said effective academic vocabulary instruction for ELLs should include incidental learning experiences and provide students opportunities to use content area academic vocabulary consistently. Teachers may lack the training to plan and implement effective targeted content area academic vocabulary instructional practices for ELL students (Correll, 2016). Targeted instruction involves systematic methods that help identify and support students' critical needs (Baecher et al., 2016). Teachers often do not understand how to provide appropriate targeted instruction or strategies to help ELL students develop their content area academic vocabulary skills for content knowledge (Irby et al., 2018). When ELL students have trouble with content

area academic vocabulary, comprehension is affected; they will likely not understand what they are reading in their language arts, science, social studies, or math classes (Haager & Osipova, 2017). Krashen (2015) said students need exposure to language that is both incidental and purposeful. ELL students are faced with learning new words and being able to use them appropriately (Krashen, 2015). They gain some word knowledge but may not be able to monitor their abilities to use words in different contexts. Without the appropriate supportive targeted instruction, gaps in content area academic vocabulary knowledge between ELLs and their peers will continue to widen (Richards-Tutor et al., 2016). ELL content area academic vocabulary development and monitoring skills can be enhanced by using targeted practices such as: supporting word consciousness, teaching word parts, use of context to include meaning and demonstrating self-check activities (Haager & Osipova, 2017). Word consciousness involves awareness of words and meanings and observing when and how to use new words. The strategy of teaching word parts can be effective because it teaches students how to break complex words into smaller parts to help recognize words, decipher words swiftly and accurately, and understand the meaning of words. Also, adding context means supporting the reader with a background picture of the vocabulary. Students use self-checking strategies during or after an academic task to review and check assignments using their vocabulary knowledge of the common errors they often make. While research has shown there are more successful ways than concentrating on learning word meanings and structure to support ELLs in the classroom, few studies have explored roadblocks that prevent ELLs from adequately developing content area academic vocabulary skills after implementing

targeted instruction. This chapter discusses the local problem, the rationale for the study, the definition of terms, and the study's significance.

Definition of the Local Problem

The problem explored through this study is that content area teachers (math, social studies, and science) at Middle School 55 (pseudonym), part of the Salem Public School District (pseudonym), are struggling to implement specific instructional model strategies to support explicit content area academic vocabulary building for ELL students. Teachers need more meaningful professional development focusing on best practices for teaching academic vocabulary to ELLs in content areas (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019). By improving their instruction, teachers may effectively promote students' content area academic vocabulary development by using specific techniques that help students make relevant connections between familiar and unfamiliar content area academic vocabulary (Stoller & Grabe, 2018). Moreover, core subject teachers need strategies to increase student engagement, time on task, and content area academic vocabulary coverage (Irby et al., 2018). Content area teachers must also provide specific academic vocabulary content scaffolding instruction and address different forms of academic vocabulary knowledge to offer instruction for ELL academic vocabulary building (Irby et al., 2018). The development of effective teaching practices should involve instructional strategies that are specific to the content area academic vocabulary development of ELLs.

The problem is documented via results from core subject teachers' content area academic vocabulary assessments at Middle School 55 during the 2018-2019 school year (see Table 1). Table 1 shows that ELL students are currently at 60% mastery and below

on unit content area academic vocabulary assessments in all three core subject areas. This percentage is well below the district-established standard student mastery of 75%. To provide teachers with evidence-based strategies and resources for their ELL students, a professional development training session for Sheltered Instruction Protocol Observation (SIOP) was offered for a half-day at the beginning of the year. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol is a teaching framework based on decades of research on best practices to provide teachers with strategies to help ELLs learn in a mainstream classroom. However, core subject area teachers at Middle School 55 expressed concern that SIOP training was not grade-level or core subject-specific. Furthermore, teachers felt that one training session was insufficient to support their efforts to provide effective instruction for ELLs. Lack of training opportunities causes teachers' knowledge of needed ELL instructional strategies for math, social studies, and science and their abilities to provide high-quality learning experiences for students whose first language is not English. Classroom core subject teachers are still challenged with implementing a specific instructional model that outlines direct instruction strategies that are particular to ELL students' core subject academic outcomes. Based on informal walkthroughs and snapshot visits, the assistant principal acknowledged a lack of consistency in how teachers integrated explicit English content area academic vocabulary instructional strategies in core subject area classrooms for ELLs at Middle School 55. Without professional development to facilitate their knowledge of effective instructional strategies for ELLs, classroom core subject teachers at Middle School 55 are struggling to implement specific instructional model strategies to support explicit academic content

area academic vocabulary building for ELL students in math, science, and social studies. By analyzing this local problem, teaching strategies and resources can be identified so that content area teachers can move toward creating more effective instructional plans for ELL students.

Table 1

Middle School 55 ELL Content Area Vocabulary Assessments 2018-2019

Grade	Math Mastery Percentage	Science Mastery Percentage	Social Studies Mastery Percentage
8	32.8%	60.0%	37.5%
7	43.1%	27.2%	43.8%
6	36.5%	37.8%	38.1%

Evidence of the problem is also documented in the Middle School 55 Report Card showing overall school letter grades. The North Carolina School Report Card, using A-F grading scale, was adopted in 2001 under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2019). The school report contains information about schools in North Carolina, including school performance grades, student academic growth, how prepared students are when they enter schools, and other measures such as grade-level proficiency and success predictions that may be valuable when exploring this problem. The school report card shows that Middle School 55's ELLs received letter grades in math, science, and social studies that ranged from D to F, and overall performance letter grades that ranged from C to D during

the 2014–2019 school years (Middle School 55, 2019b). ELLs in this district make up 27% of the student population (NCDPI, 2019). Although district administrators verbalized the need for useful strategies in teaching and reaching ELL students, there are still discrepancies in their education, second language acquisition, and communication obstacles.

ELL students still did not meet the district and state standards for end-of-grade (EOG) assessments for 2018-2019 in science, social studies, and math. Assessments data from NCDPI (2019) show that 21% of students at Middle School 55 are grade-level proficient in math, 38% are proficient in science, and 21% are proficient in social studies. The performance of ELLs on the state assessment test showed a gap of 20-40% when compared to students not classified as ELLs (NCDPI, 2019.)

Currently, the Salem Public School District does not require subject area teacher certification in ELLs; only teachers that teach English as a second language are adequately trained to teach ELLs. They recently announced the intent to prioritize professional development for providing useful content area-specific instructional strategies that support ELLs' development of content area vocabulary; however, there have been no professional development workshops offered to date for subject area teachers. The one workshop scheduled for the year, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), was created specifically for ELLs, not subject area teachers. The district also offers training opportunities in subjects such as reteaching vocabulary concepts, using graphic organizers to dissect vocabulary, and using native language to help students understand second language vocabulary. Trainings are designed to offer

research-based strategies that will help subject area teachers when they are teaching academic vocabulary, though trainings are neither mandatory nor specific to the needs of ELLs. Lack of professional development opportunities in terms of how to meet the needs of ELLs as they struggle to develop academic content area vocabulary has led to a further disconnect between teachers and their knowledge of research-based instructional practices. Even though there has been district one-day ESOL training for ELL teachers, as well as changes in terms of curriculum, assessment, and standards, there are still direct concerns at Middle School 55 for discipline areas teachers who do not receive adequate training. According to a district survey, content area teachers who provide academic vocabulary instruction for ELL suggested a need for more effective instructional strategies and resources than are currently being provided. Moreover, content area teachers indicated on the survey that district-developed word-to-word dictionaries for students provided little support in terms of addressing their needs. Teachers who are conscious of ELL students' needs to improve academic language fluency in English may be better equipped to help those students succeed academically (National Council of Teachers of English, 2020).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

This study was intended to investigate the perceptions of classroom core subject teachers about their ability to implement specific instructional model strategies to support direct content area academic vocabulary building for ELL students. Content area teachers in secondary classrooms and university teachers have pointed to a lack of knowledge and

limited training about ELL strategies as primary reasons why they have not been able to adequately support ELLs in content areas (Siebert et al., 2016). Low achievement scores in core subjects have prompted this investigation into types of direct instructional strategies core subject teachers implement in their classrooms to support academic content area academic vocabulary needs of ELLs. This study used a basic qualitative research design to understand how classroom core subject teachers are executing specific instructional model strategies to support direct instruction in academic content area vocabulary building for ELL students. Responses to interview questions will help determine if and how core subject teachers at the study school are using direct instructional strategies to support academic content area academic vocabulary instruction in classroom core subject areas. Furthermore, I highlight gaps in instructional practices that may be impeding student learning, particularly as they relate to the extent to which core subject area teachers in the school know effective instructional practices for ELLs. The problem that was explored in this study is that classroom core subject teachers at Middle School 55 are struggling to implement specific instructional model strategies to support direct instruction academic vocabulary building for ELL students. Subject content area secondary school teachers are unfamiliar with how to support academic vocabulary development among their ELLs (Hellman, 2018).

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

The development of academic vocabulary knowledge is key to success in academic subjects, including science, social studies, and mathematics (Kessler et al., 2018). The importance of academic vocabulary in terms of academic success is clear.

However, less appears to be known about how content area teachers can help support academic vocabulary development among their ELLs. Discipline area academic vocabulary knowledge is essential to reading and academic achievement (Gibson, 2106). Many teachers dedicate little time to intensive discipline area instruction in this area because they may lack relevant sound and pedagogical knowledge (Newton, 2018). Although challenging, teachers play a perilous role in supporting language development, which they need to help students learn and use language features connected with academic discourse.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout the study to clearly understand its scope.

Core subjects: Traditional academic subject areas such as English language arts, reading, mathematics, the sciences, and history/social studies (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019).

Direct instruction: Research-based teaching strategy that includes well-developed lessons that have been planned and built around short learning increments. Learning activities have been explicitly outlined (Engelmann, 1980).

English language learners (ELLs): The term may be used to describe a diverse group of students with varying language and academic needs (Colorin Colorado, 2019). This may include students who are not fluent speakers of the English language and students who have basic communication skills but struggle with content area academic vocabulary (Renaissance, 2020).

Explicit instruction: Meticulous and strategic teaching of skills or concepts to students using structured techniques (Hughes et al., 2018). Instruction is teacher-led and

standards-based, with objectives that have been clearly established prior to the teaching and learning process (Hughes et al., 2018). The term explicit is related to instructional practices that have been definitively established in terms of planning and delivery (Clayton County Schools, 2021).

Professional development: Topic-specific training used to increase the knowledge and effectiveness of administrators, teachers, and nonlicensed personnel through sharing of common theories and research-based strategies involving curriculum, instruction, and learning (National Education Association [NEA], 2019).

Sheltered Instruction Protocol Observation (SIOP): A professional development model that helps teachers plan and deliver lessons that allow English learners to acquire academic knowledge as they develop English language proficiency (Koura & Zahran, 2017).

Scaffold instruction: A process through which a teacher adds support for students to enhance learning and aid in the mastery of tasks (Schall-Leckrone, 2018). As used in construction and development fields, the term scaffolding refers to support mechanisms as workers complete their job assignments. In the classroom setting, scaffolding is use of supportive resources and strategies that increase students' abilities to successfully complete assignments (Northern Illinois Center for Teaching and Learning, 2012).

Significance of the Study

This study may be significant in terms of understanding how gaps in teachers' use of specific instructional model strategies impact the academic vocabulary development of ELLs at a local level. Findings could be used to address teachers' knowledge and

implementation of specific instructional model strategies. The findings of this study might also contribute to adopting a specific academic vocabulary instructional model for content subject area teachers to expand their understanding, skills, and confidence in providing effective teaching for ELLs. These findings may contribute to teachers developing a greater knowledge of specific strategies that help students meet mastery and proficiency standards. This project study may also contribute to the field of academic vocabulary instruction for ELLs in middle schools and subsequently lead to the development of a curriculum that supports teacher improvement and student success.

Results may lead to instructional practices which can be used by middle school teachers that may strengthen content academic vocabulary instruction for ELLs in core subject areas, as measured by local and state assessments. This present study may provide an original contribution to the field of English language teaching and learning, both locally and nationally, by offering specific perspectives regarding how to implement specific instructional model strategies to support direct instruction academic vocabulary building for ELL students. Academic vocabulary is the most critical area in need of development with ELL students (Brandes & McMaster, 2017). Core subject area teachers must be able to provide middle school ELLs with useful explicit academic vocabulary to increase their knowledge and be able to apply meaning in content areas (Gallagher et al., 2019). The findings of the study may contribute to a positive social change by identifying useful academic vocabulary instructional strategies that promote academic vocabulary development of ELL students and enhance teachers' self-reliance and abilities to provide consistent content area academic vocabulary instruction for ELL students. The ELL

population continues to grow both nationally (NCES, 2020) and locally, with the school district among the top three districts in the state with the largest ELL student populations. Although research studies support the need for useful strategies in teaching and reaching ELL students, there is a need to investigate the perceptions of classroom core subject teachers in terms of how they are implementing specific instructional model strategies to support direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students.

Research Questions

The study involved investigating perceptions of classroom core subject teachers regarding their ability to implement specific instructional model strategies to support direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students.

This basic qualitative study was guided by two research questions (RQs):

RQ1: How do core subject area teachers at Middle School 55 effectively implement teaching strategies to support ELL students' academic vocabulary acquisition, retention, and application in math, social studies, and science?

RQ2: What academic resources do core subject teachers perceive they need to effectively provide explicit academic vocabulary instruction for ELLs?

Review of the Literature

This doctoral project study investigated perceptions of classroom core subject teachers at Middle School 55 about how they implement specific instructional model strategies to support direct academic vocabulary acquisition for ELL students. An extensive review of the current literature was conducted to gain perspectives on how core subject teachers feel about their challenges involving implementing specific instructional

model strategies to support direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students. The literature review is organized into two sections focusing on the conceptual framework and articles that support the need for the development of English language skills through core subject area academic vocabulary knowledge, and professional development as it applies to middle school students. To accomplish this literature review, I read peer-reviewed journal articles and reviewed research-based strategies, college textbooks, and other journal articles which were identified via the following databases over a 4-year period from 2016 to 2020: EBSCOHost, Education Research, Eric, ProQuest, and SAGE Journals. The following keywords were used in this review: *academic vocabulary for ELLs*, *core subject academic vocabulary instruction*, *best practices for ELLs*, *instructional practices for ELLs*, *teacher development*, *explicit instruction*, *direct instruction, ESL strategies, ELLs in the content area* and *core subject teachers' perspectives on ELL academic vocabulary learning*.

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study was Becker and Engelmann's (1973a, 1973b) direct instruction model for effective and explicit teaching. Since Becker and Engelmann's effective and explicit teaching model provides research-based principles for teachers of all grade levels, teachers in Middle School 55 may benefit from using it with ELL students who are developing academic vocabulary skills. Bereiter and Engelmann (1966) initially designed explicit instruction, which became known as the direct instruction model for teaching to create equitable learning opportunities for children from low-income families. Engelmann (1999) said poor instruction was at the core of student

learning failure. Becker and Engelmann (1973b) said students who received direct instruction from effective teachers showed significant gains in reading as opposed to students who did not receive the same quality of instruction. Engelmann (2015) said a school in Nebraska grew in proficiency from 39% of ELLs meeting standards to 57% after using direct instruction.

The terms direct instruction and explicit instruction are often used interchangeably, referring to a specific teaching method. For the purposes of this study, the term direct instruction was used to explain or discuss the model of instruction as it relates to best practices for teaching ELLs. Direct instruction is compartmentalized into several instructional/assessment components, including planning and design, delivery and management, and evaluation/assessment (Engelmann, 1980). This type of instruction has been occasionally called systematic, explicit, or active teaching (Hackathorn et al., 2011; Kenny, 1980; O'Reilly et al., 1992; Rosenshine, 1986). Direct instruction originated mainly from curriculum development. The original direct instructional system for teaching and remediation (DISTAR) was used to provide students with a structured sequence of instructional tasks that were clearly defined so that the chances of students misinterpreting information would be eliminated (Becker & Engelmann, 1978). Eventually, DISTAR became simply known as direct instruction.

The purpose of direct instruction has changed since the model was first introduced in the field of education. Becker and Engelmann (1978) said social mobility was largely determined by students' abilities to read as well as their acclimation into societies in which they lived. Instructional time should be modeled after common practices

embedded in many communities, where teachers establish a time for skills development and set additional time to allow students to explore other activities (Engelmann et al., 1988). Students with more diverse interests were more likely to become and remain more successful learners (Becker & Engelmann, 1978). It involves the use of small-group and face-to-face teaching by teachers using cautiously articulated lessons in which reasoning skills are broken down into small units, sequenced purposefully, and taught explicitly (Engelmann, 1999). Nisbet and Tindall (2015) said the direct instruction model involves skills development, and instructional practices are teacher-directed.

According to Becker and Engelmann (1978), there are six research-based principles and functions that have proven effective for structuring meaningful academic vocabulary connections throughout the academic year: optimizing engaged time/time on task, promoting high levels of success, increasing content coverage, scaffolding instruction, more time in instructional groups, and addressing different forms of knowledge. A sequence of supports or scaffolds characterizes the direct instruction model's principles, with guidance in how students are directed through the learning process with a clear understanding of objectives and rationales for learning (Engelmann, 1999). Students are given clear explanations, modeling, and supported practice with feedback until independent mastery has been accomplished (Becker, 1977). Mastery is determined via progress monitoring and benchmarks included in the model.

Mastery learning is an important part of the direct instruction model. However, explicit curriculum planning, and effective lesson planning and delivery are the foundation for the model (Becker & Engelmann, 1978). Teaching methods included

teaching in small mini-lessons with student practice following each mini-lesson, scaffolding students through initial practice, and guaranteeing that all students are engaged in a high level of successful practice (Carnine et al., 1988). The direct instruction model emphasizes teacher instruction's effectiveness rather than deficits children may have.

There are differences that separate direct instruction from other models of explicit instruction, such as the SIOP model. Direct instruction emphasizes curriculum design and effective instructional implementation (Becker & Engelmann, 1978). Moreover, it provides an explicit and structured approach to language instruction that effectively supports children with language deficits, including students with disabilities and ELLs (Becker & Engelmann, 1973a, 1978). There are more opportunities for students who struggle with language to actively engage in the learning process by learning academic vocabulary concepts and developing their language skills.

Rosenshine and Stevens (1986) described direct instruction as a successful teaching model for teaching any content area, including reading, science, social studies, or mathematics. According to Rosenshine and Stevens, direct instruction involves how students generalize from prior knowledge and understanding to new concepts and skills. Direct instruction consists of sequencing classroom tasks for students and how teachers facilitate students through those tasks (Stockard et al., 2018). Explicit lessons include a multifaceted system of scripted conversations, questions, and signals in which students provide varying responses during extended and interactive activities (Rosenshine &

Stevens, 1986). Professional and explicitly scripted lesson plans that reduce laborious preparation tasks allow teachers to be more productive.

Another area of focus was teacher-student response, where teachers offer frequent signals and students respond to gather mastery. Lessons that target specific skills are also at the core of the direct instruction model (Hammond & Moore, 2018). Additionally, appropriate pacing involves students being taught lessons in small segments and assessing and practicing material taught in those short sessions. These assessments must be appropriate to allow differential corrective feedback. Direct instruction involves drill and practice, supporting student engagement in terms of learning processes with direct teaching, guided practice, and relevant activities (Engelmann et al., 1988). Active engagement and high-impact teaching are essential.

Although there are six principles of the framework, only three principles were used for this study: The first principle, optimizing time on task by delivery with models and demonstrations, involves teachers establishing appropriate responses by performing desired behaviors during instructional periods and explaining to students why responses are appropriate. Teachers use a show (modeling) and tell (explaining) model to guide students through processing and applying information to successfully complete a task (Hughes et al., 2017). The second principle is scaffolding instruction, during which teachers provide support to students using guided practice. Breaking learning tasks into smaller units helps students process information without becoming overwhelmed and frustrated by large amounts of information at once. Keshavarz and Taherian (2018) said using a chunk-by-chunk rather than a word-by-word approach is more effective when

teaching ELLs how to use language correctly. Chunk-by-chunk activities allow students to break difficult words or text into sections that help them to gather meaning by using surrounding contextual clues, whereas word-by-word activities focus on words in isolation, making the meaning more difficult. ELLs working in instructional groups can receive more individualized support as they work towards learning new academic vocabulary with intensive teacher support (Casey et al., 2018). Using instructional groups allows teachers to gradually shift students from full support toward independent performance.

Once they transition from instructional group support to independent performance, students can demonstrate proficiency in terms of academic vocabulary through oral and written expression (Hunt & Feng, 2016). Freeman (2017) described the gradual release approach as teachers and students working together to complete a portion of a task and students being given the responsibility to complete the rest of the task independently. T, Al-Ghazo (2016) said direct instruction helps ELL students expand their knowledge of academic vocabulary as well as read for comprehension. Gallagher et al. (2019) said middle school ELLs did not demonstrate significant improvements in word knowledge when incidental teaching was used, demonstrating the importance of direct academic vocabulary instruction to support learning new words. One of the challenges currently faced by secondary teachers is how to meet the learning needs of ELL students with limited vocabularies that prevent them from accessing academic content (Soland & Sandilos, 2021). The complexity of text and content-specific academic vocabulary demonstrates the importance of teachers providing direct academic

vocabulary instruction; moreover, students need to be taught evidence-based strategies that will allow them to independently learn new academic vocabulary (Swanson et al., 2017). Examples of strategies that may be beneficial when teaching academic vocabulary to ELL students include preteaching academic vocabulary concepts and peer collaborations (Denne, 2017), using technology to find and review definitions of academic vocabulary terms (Hilgenkamp, 2019), and visual supports (United States Census Bureau, 2020).

Finding specific methods to support ELLs as they develop their academic vocabulary skills is the basis for this study. Becker and Engelmann's direct instruction model was chosen to frame this research because identifying and using evidence-based instructional practices in content area classrooms could possibly meet ELL students' needs and increase achievement. When ELL students are learning a new language, direct teaching provides them with the best learning opportunities (Le-Thi et al., 2017). Direct instruction has served as the basis for ELL-focused programs and models, including sheltered instruction (SI), content-based instruction (CBI), and dual immersion. Within these programs, teachers and researchers look for effective practices that meet the needs of ELL students.

Academic Vocabulary Instruction for English Language Learners

The literature review provides an opportunity to explore the development of English language skills through core subject area academic vocabulary knowledge as it applies to middle school students. Literature, including scholarship on the direct instruction framework for effective and efficient teaching, may support future research in

terms of identifying specific academic vocabulary strategies that will help core area teachers support the academic vocabulary growth of middle school ELL students. Also, Ostayan (2016) said as elementary students' level of language academic vocabulary proficiency increased, so did their assessment outcomes, underscoring the need for specific academic vocabulary strategies for ELLs in middle school.

Academic Vocabulary Development

To be successful in language learning, ELLs must develop a strong academic vocabulary foundation. ELLs are challenged with the arduous task of learning a second language, building an academic vocabulary foundation for the language, and striving to meet grade level expectations (Gibson, 2016). As students learn new languages, their success largely depends on their ability to acquire content-area academic vocabulary to experience academic success (Brandes & McMaster, 2017). An effective curriculum is one that emphasizes improving instructional strategies by targeting academic vocabulary concepts specifically for ELLs; this will support their ability to make connections with text (Ardasheva et al., 2019). ELLs have limited or no success accessing content area curriculum without a firm grasp of content area academic vocabulary (Crosson & Moore, 2017).

Because students at the secondary level are expected to have acquired basic reading skills in elementary school, emphasis on explicit academic vocabulary instruction cannot be understated, particularly for ELLs who are struggling readers. ELLs have a better chance of academic success as they become more proficient with their academic vocabulary skills (Jackson et al., 2017). Direct strategies such as interactive word walls

that use graphic organizers or data tables and highlight connections between academic vocabulary and concepts can increase students' ability to learn and successfully use academic language (Jackson et al., 2107). Rasinski et al. (2017) supported that inadequate knowledge of content area academic vocabulary may result in gaps in students' learning as they attempt to build new knowledge. As students encounter content area academic vocabulary primarily in the school setting, it is the educator's task to help students master new academic vocabulary while teaching content knowledge.

There is a link between ELL students and content-area classes where the students find limited academic vocabulary knowledge as a hurdle when learning. Putra (2016) supported that in the ELL context, academic vocabulary supports the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Putra (2016) suggested strategies focused on language acquisition and the academic vocabulary language learning process. Meaning-focused input, planned learning, and fluency activities are proposed strategies useful for academic vocabulary development of ELLs (Putra, 2016, p. 187). Nushi and Jenabzadeh (2016) supported that focusing on direct strategies that allow ELL students to learn academic vocabulary in context is most beneficial. Teaching strategies involving using content academic vocabulary instruction textbooks with themes and passages evolved around real-world ideas and tools that allow ELLs to connect new information to prior knowledge was proven very helpful in their research.

Content Area Academic Vocabulary

In the past, students in middle grades have struggled in their abilities to read and comprehend texts, resulting in frustration that causes them to lose interest in and

disconnect from learning (Protacio, 2017). At the elementary level (K- 6), teachers reported using the SIOP model with fidelity to provide instruction for their ELLs, pulling in differentiated instruction methods to help bridge learning gaps in their core content area classes. However, no consistent efforts have been reported at the middle school level to identify and implement strategies such as direct academic vocabulary instruction to improve the academic experiences of their ELL students. There is also a need for supportive instructional practices for middle and high school English learners to access grade-level content academic vocabulary, become proficient speakers of the language, acquire new vocabularies, and advance their ability to reading for clarity and understanding (Peercy et al., 2019). Babinski et al. (2018) found a positive correlation between high-quality, consistent professional training and teachers' use of research-based resources and strategies designed specifically to support ELLs' academic vocabulary development and increase their literacy outcomes. The results of the study indicated that teachers who had participated in professional development were able to implement the instructional strategies with a high level of fidelity. The study is relevant to this project study as it supports that teachers need high-impact instructional strategies for ELLs to show significant academic vocabulary growth in their English language and literacy skills.

Improving direct academic vocabulary instruction is a fundamental element of academic language and literacy acquisition for ELL students (Abbas, 2017). Helping identify similar strategies for this study and draw conclusions that will be used to inform teacher instruction and practices (Kim et al., 2018). One such method was discussed in

the research of Iqbal and Komal (2017), who examined how the Academic vocabulary Knowledge Scale could be used to support ELL's language acquisition. Because this current study on exploring core subject area academic vocabulary instructional strategies for middle school English learners will use the direct instruction framework for effective and efficient teaching theory as a framework, Iqbal and Komal's (2017) exploration of activities that aid in the academic vocabulary enrichment of middle school ELL students will provide additional support for this research. In addition to the Academic vocabulary Knowledge Scale, Kirby teamed with other researchers in a study focusing on different ways middle-grade science teachers implemented ESL strategies using observation protocol (Kirby & Bowers, 2018). The writers emphasized the importance of teachers creating opportunities for ELL students to learn content-specific academic vocabulary. In their study findings concerning the education of ELLs, Johnston et al. (2018) suggested that incorporating more academic vocabulary instruction strategies has positive effects on reading, particularly when teachers generate strategies on academic vocabulary acquisition and function, use academic vocabulary to develop knowledge and become masters at utilizing academic vocabulary to improve reading. ELLs must receive explicit instruction that helps them develop their reading comprehension skills, such as using the context to establish meaning and finding text-based evidence to support any conclusions they have drawn after reading content-specific text (Braden et al., 2016; Lindahl, 2019). Being able to target those key components will allow teachers to provide more effective academic vocabulary instruction.

Direct exposure to content-area academic vocabulary is essential to the success of ELLs in the classroom. When deciding which words to teach ELLs, teachers should base their decisions on words found in academic and domain-specific contexts (Richards-Tutor et al., 2016). Using embedded academic vocabulary has also been suggested, where students are consistently exposed to user-friendly definitions of target academic vocabulary words (August, 2018). This could occur during incidental use of academic vocabulary, particularly when students produce oral language. Walqui and Heritage (2018) suggested that teachers pay attention to oral language usage to identify opportunities to introduce new terminology. For example, suppose ELL students use certain words or phrases multiple times during an oral exchange. In that case, the teacher can introduce alternative words that the student can add to their academic vocabulary (Walqui & Heritage, 2018). If students use a word incorrectly, teachers should immediately intervene to provide correction and explanation of correct terminology (Walqui & Heritage, 2018).

Academic Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Academic vocabulary learning strategies are not developed in isolation, as academic vocabulary learning strategies are interwoven with linguistic learning strategies. Wright and Cervetti (2017) conducted a study that reviewed academic vocabulary interventions that impact reading comprehension. When students are taught academic word meanings, they are better able to read and understand those texts that contain the academic words they have learned. Actively engaging students as they are learning new content academic vocabulary was determined to be more effective for

supporting the comprehension of texts containing academic words than having students only write definitions of the words. According to Viswanathan and Sultana (2019), English as a second language and English as a Foreign Language, Indian students find it challenging to learn the content in their disciplinary classes because of their limited knowledge of content academic vocabulary. Specific academic vocabulary learning strategies that focus on cognitive methods using etymology, semantics, and affixes are supported (Laufer, 2016; Viswanathan & Sultana, 2019). Independent academic vocabulary-building strategies for adolescents and beyond, along with comprehensive direct teacher instruction, had an impact on academic vocabulary achievement. A VLearn learning platform was designed and implemented to support a needed increase in the academic vocabulary size of Hong Kong adolescent students (Tang et al., 2016). VLearn, as explained by Tang et al. (2016), is a virtual self-pace platform focused on academic vocabulary, with an objective to teach students to develop academic vocabulary learning strategies for acquiring new words. Tang et al. (2016) concluded that most Hong Kong adolescents had not acquired the level of academic vocabulary to understand English academic texts effectively, where English is the adapted language. As a specific form of a learning strategy, self-directed academic vocabulary learning is supported by Tang et al. (2016) to expand academic knowledge and academic vocabulary skills. It is necessary to understand the relationship between academic vocabulary skills and reading. Comprehensive academic vocabulary knowledge is a prerequisite for reading and all learning (Sibanda & Baxen, 2016). Sibanda and Baxen (2016) suggested that words taught directly should coincide with the English learners' core academic vocabulary

needs. Their studies of South African ELLs supported that the implementation of grade-specific core academic vocabulary lists comprised of curriculum-specific context-based words ultimately generate strong large-scale academic vocabulary knowledge (Sibanda & Baxen, 2016). Students acquire academic vocabulary knowledge to analyze complex words in context and build on that knowledge to learn unfamiliar words.

As they build their academic vocabulary knowledge, ELL students have an opportunity to become "vocabularians," or proficient users of academic vocabulary. Chai and Welz (2019) emphasized the importance of learners becoming "vocabularians" by teachers creating active and engaged learners. They supported using content-specific strategies (i.e., social studies) focused on the methods of exploring, practicing, and applying to produce a classroom of learners actively using and recognizing words (Chai & Welz, 2019). Focusing on content-specific strategies and guiding the use of those strategies will likely increase their ability to acquire academic vocabulary skills that will allow them to understand and use content-area academic vocabulary in a meaningful way.

Content-area learning for ELLs focuses on the academic skills and instructional pedagogies needed for students to flourish across core academic courses. Each subject content area has its own academic vocabulary, knowledge base, pedagogies, and specific strategies for teaching and learning. Schneider and Ming (2019) supported that content-area learning becomes progressively essential for reading, writing, and speaking tasks. Multisensory structured metacognitive language (MSML) instruction is suggested for adolescent learners who acquire, memorize, and use academic vocabulary across

disciplines (Schneider & Ming, 2019). MSML focuses on direct instruction that includes content academic vocabulary knowledge that offers students with learner-centered opportunities to incorporate direct and structured learning experiences while allowing them to engage in academic vocabulary knowledge growth (Schneider & Ming, 2019).

While all students need to develop academic vocabulary strategies that will help them achieve academically, the teacher must also focus on the role of the teacher in developing quality lessons that focus on content-specific academic vocabulary knowledge. One method for teaching content-specific academic vocabulary is word generation. Rimbey and Kucan's (2018) study examined middle school teacher implementation of a word generation strategy focused on content-area academic vocabulary words. Word generation focused on an interdisciplinary method of academic vocabulary instruction, with all core-subject area teachers teaching learners the same academic vocabulary across language arts, math, science, and social studies. The outcome suggested that with a proper understanding of the academic vocabulary strategy, teachers were able to make a clear sense of the implementation of the academic vocabulary and effectively improve student learning of academic vocabulary (Rimbey & Kucan, 2018). Understanding and using appropriate academic vocabulary strategies show promise in bridging the gaps between teaching and learning.

While teachers in the elementary grades are expected to prepare students to become successful readers, content area teachers in middle schools are predominately focused on teaching students how to acquire new content-specific academic vocabulary instruction. Students who lack basic reading skills will likely have a reduced capacity to

understand what they are reading (Rasinski et al., 2017), which will impact their academic experiences. As students will gain higher engagement with content-area academic vocabulary in the school setting; therefore, the educator has a greater responsibility to help students master new academic vocabulary while teaching content knowledge (Rasinski et al., 2017). To identify specific direct instructional strategies that may increase the chances of forty foreign language learners' academic vocabulary learning, Rahimi and Allahyari (2019) conducted a study using multimedia-assisted pre-taught direct academic vocabulary learning strategies. The development and implementation of teaching strategies were found to be an advantage for English-speaking students while also bridging the gap with non-English speaking students as they learned content academic vocabulary (Rahimi & Allahyari, 2019).

For many ELLs, limited academic language academic vocabulary was instrumental in their inability to understand grade-level texts and the literacy tasks expected of them (Coates, 2016). Research suggests that ELLs require direct academic vocabulary language proficiency; therefore, it is even more important for them to consistently be exposed to effective and explicit instruction throughout middle school that will allow them to develop their language and academic vocabulary proficiency by allowing them multiple opportunities and contexts to use the words they have learned (Crosson et al., 2019a). Factors contributing to second language development are considered in two broad categories - the mastery of L2 academic vocabulary and structures and language-specific knowledge (Ardasheva et al., 2019). Davis et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative study to explore the need to understand the instructional

intervention focused on ELL strategies that middle school readers need to comprehend and make sense of science texts, focusing on academic vocabulary. In this study conducted by Davis et al., several measures, expository comprehension, deliberate knowledge and awareness, English-language academic vocabulary proficiency, think-aloud protocol, and previous content knowledge, were randomly assigned to 83 middle school students. The outcome of the study showed that students outperformed in measures of English-language academic vocabulary proficiency, suggesting that more specific strategies that assist ELL adolescents comprehend and gain knowledge from content texts in the discipline of science is recommended (Ardasheva et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2017). The studies suggested that when direct academic vocabulary instruction is executed, whether multi-media or conventional, it positively impacts foreign language learners' academic vocabulary retention and cognitive strategies.

Research on ELL Students' Perspectives of Learning Experiences

Although my study will not include direct contact with students, it is important to understand research studies completed on learning from the students' perspectives. Perceived communication deficits may have a negative effect on many ELL students, decreasing their confidence as learners and causing them to experience academic difficulties (Alfano-Cooper, 2017). Providing the perspectives of adolescent learners may be important when identifying various instructional approaches that are supportive of their learning (Oliver & Azkarai, 2017). Collecting and analyzing data from both teachers and students provides "multiple realities, or interpretations" (Thompson, 2019, p. 22) of best practices for teaching ELLs, as well as bridging the cultural gap between ELLs and

their teachers (Shim & Shur, 2018). Shim and Shur used this approach in their own students as they investigated how middle and high school ELL students' perspectives of their learning experiences compared with the views of their teachers. Second language research must consider that a direct study of ELL children is necessary for more understanding of language acquisition (Lumbreras, 2016; Oliver & Azkarai, 2017). After exploring different perspectives that focus on making meaning, Krashen (2015) offered a new theory about how second language is acquired, and language learners engage in the learning process. Academic vocabulary was described in Krashen's research as an important variable when individuals are learning a new language, in addition to identifying specific strategies that are most effective for ELLs as they are developing their new academic vocabulary skills. Teachers will be asked how they use data to analyze their student's needs based on best practices that have been identified through research. Finding and implementing academic vocabulary instruction aligned with best practices is the goal of this study by investigating core subject teachers' views about how they are employing specific instructional model strategies to improve academic vocabulary building for ELL students.

Student-centered learning is among the best practices that may be considered when finding and implementing academic vocabulary instruction. Student-centered learning supported by the teacher's use of direct instruction was found by Shim and Shur (2018) to provide a more stable foundation from which teachers could improve the academic outcomes of ELL students. The findings helped establish a positive outcome when teachers closed the gap in practice to help ELLs develop academic vocabulary

knowledge. Uccelli and Phillips Galloway (2017) supported promoting learning practices that engage students and teachers in the expansion of content knowledge and conceptual understanding while paying attention to language, and academic vocabulary is essential. Direct instruction with video viewing may be a valuable resource for students in English as a foreign language, exposing them to large quantities of input to improve their academic vocabulary and content comprehension (Jerotijević-Tišma, 2016; Suárez & Gesa, 2019). When considering the effectiveness of direct instruction with video viewing, individual differences such as aptitude, listening skills, and academic vocabulary size should be considered relevant factors in determining such effectiveness (Crosson et al., 2019a). In fact, students found captioned videos provided a significant benefit even with only one viewing, regardless of educational level or language background (Suárez & Gesa, 2019). Therefore, it may prove beneficial for teachers to use student-centered strategies, such as captioned videos, when providing direct instruction on academic vocabulary.

Additional studies have explored the effectiveness of student-centered direct instruction for ELL students. Garner and Allan (2019) examined adolescent Chinese learners' feelings about the teaching and building of academic vocabulary knowledge. Participants in the study were asked to reflect on their learning outcomes after being taught to guess the meaning of a content-area word before checking the definition. Students reported that they benefited from direct teaching methods that gave them the ability to develop and build academic vocabulary in context. Responses also suggested that students felt that they benefited from using context to build word meaning,

specifically synonym knowledge, through an inquiry-based approach (Garner & Allan, 2019). The findings from Garner and Allan's (2019) study were similar to those in Chou's (2018) research. Chou (2018) identified academic vocabulary knowledge as being vital to second and foreign language learners' abilities to acquire new words, primarily because insufficient academic vocabulary is a significant problem in their attainment of second language (L2) learning. Chou's (2018) study showed that students had positive attitudes towards direct academic vocabulary instruction that enhanced their ability to learn and use new vocabulary. Teachers' use of direct instruction methods may provide the level of support needed to help their ELL students acquire academic vocabulary skills needed in the core content areas.

Educator Preparation and Beliefs

Educator preparation in teaching ELL students and teachers' beliefs in their ELL students' abilities to succeed is at the heart of effective teaching. The Office of English Language Acquisition (2020) reported that ELLs represent 10% of the nation's total K–12 student population. According to Quintero and Hansen (2017), 55% of all public-school teachers teach ELL students in their classrooms, while only one-third have some modest training to support ELLs. The Education Commission of the States (2020) revealed in 2014 that over 30 states do not require any ELL training for core subject area teachers beyond that mandated by federal law. Research supported the idea that teachers skilled and equipped to work with ELL students can effectively enhance ELL students' development (Quintero & Hansen, 2017). These studies support that effective teacher learning and professional development are imperative for student success. Middle school

ELLs face challenges that show the importance of teaching academic vocabulary practices in the middle grades through content academic vocabulary and knowledge (Duguay et al., 2016). To access content-area texts and subsequent content knowledge, instructional practices should extend beyond the development of basic reading skills and be specific to the needs of ELL students (Master et al., 2016; Vaughn et al., 2017). Teachers' efficacy and ability to implement strategies to increase content academic vocabulary, and knowledge play a significant role in student achievement (Vaughn et al., 2017) at Middle School 55. Truong (2017) explored the ineffectiveness of current educational models for ELL students. Specifically, Truong addressed two areas that were the most under-developed when it came to teaching ELLs: academic content vocabulary and limited educator preparation; of the two areas, the academic content area vocabulary will be the focus of the research at Middle School 55. According to Truong, only one-third of district-level leaders believe educators in their schools are prepared to teach ELL students effectively. Moreover, educators are often lacking the appropriate training in ELL learning methods.

With the growing number of ELL students in public schools across the country, including the school targeted for this study, it is important that teachers understand and use evidence-based teaching methods that are specific to the learning needs of ELL students. Ideally, teachers should reflect on their practices and continue to explore resources and methods that promote equitable learning for diverse student populations (Hong et al., 2018; Montero, 2019). However, many educators are unprepared to provide appropriate instruction to ELLs (Jackson & Durham, 2016). Furthermore, teachers'

attitudes and beliefs about teaching and learning for ELLs will have an influence on their ability and willingness to provide high-quality instruction for ELL students (Alfano-Cooper, 2017). Research has identified teacher beliefs about their students as the highest indicator of student achievement (Lumbreras, 2016). Zhang (2017) supported that academic text, such as social studies text, is challenging for ELL students, and teachers face challenges in educating these students. She supports that all content teachers should have strategies that address the linguistic demands in core subject areas to increase content academic vocabulary mastery. Uribe (2019) supported that core subject area teachers of ELLs are challenged to teach grade-specific standards and curricula to students with varying abilities of language proficiency. This concern warrants the need for ELL instructional strategies to make language and content academic vocabulary accessible to all students. When teaching ELLs who are still developing academic language proficiency, it is imperative to provide instructional strategies and incorporate essential reading, academic vocabulary, and language skills across all content areas (Turkan & de Jong, 2018; Uribe, 2019). Curriculum-based reading strategies that focus on reading fluency and academic vocabulary development are a consistent approach for teaching ELLs (Uribe, 2019). Theories such as cognitive–academic language proficiency (CALP) have allowed researchers to explore ways in which to bridge the gap in academic vocabulary achievement among English as a Second Language Learners and non-ELL in secondary courses based on teachers' time allocation (Tong et al., 2017). It was found that after teachers participated in professional development that included how to teach and implement CALP strategies like expressive academic vocabulary, oral reading

fluency, there was a notable increase in their ELLs' academic vocabulary development (Tong et al., 2017). Garza et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of teachers having the cognitive skills needed to effectively deliver the academic vocabulary content to students to ensure the best possible outcomes for student success. Garza et al. focused on the importance of teacher collaboration and reflection and how these academic vocabulary practices can ultimately affect how teachers teach and continue growing as educators. The goal is to provide core subject teachers with resources and strategies that have been identified as most effective when working with ELLs (Garza et al., 2017; Tong et al., 2017). As the ELL student population in many school districts increases, so does the need to prepare teachers to use appropriate strategies to support ELL students effectively.

Implications

This doctoral study aims to investigate how content area teachers at Middle School 55 perceive their abilities to effectively use specific instructional model strategies to support direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students. The implications of this project study are that the local district can effectively use direct instructional strategies and implement specialized professional development. With the findings from my study, core subject teachers may increase their knowledge and skills to support direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students in the core subject classroom. If core subject teachers have the needed knowledge and skills to support academic vocabulary building for ELL students, the chance of helping the ELLs to be successful throughout the school will be higher.

Core subject teachers must be highly skilled in ELL pedagogy to successfully deliver appropriate direct instructional strategies to increase academic vocabulary building for ELLs and increase student achievement. The conclusions of this doctoral project study could be advantageous to teachers, administrators, policymakers, and others in the field of education. Consideration should be for the ELL student population should be included when developing educational goals and strategies to build academic vocabulary development. These ELL students come from diverse backgrounds. As educators continue to develop and revise educational practices, teachers must consider and understand the student population's various learning styles and cultural differences, focusing on academic vocabulary development that may ultimately build reading fluency.

Educators and parents also play valuable roles in the development of educational goals for students. Educators and parents can work together to ensure that ELL students have the necessary instruction and resources to become academic masters, responsible citizens, valued workers, and continuous learners. When supporting ELL learners, a significant challenge is using the common educational goals to reach students because of the barriers faced and brought to the classroom setting. Delivering solid academic vocabulary development knowledge and understanding all types of learners must be accomplished (Correll, 2016). Not only are the educators invested in this effort, but also the school and district administrators. The goals and strategies that are implemented may inevitably determine school success among local schools and states, as plans are made to build programs and foster student growth. The findings of this study could theoretically help and direct school administrators in creating professional development where

teachers enhance their knowledge and skills to effectively help ELLs build their vocabularies.

Additionally, when properly delivered, direct instructional strategies and professional development can potentially assist beginner teachers in becoming masters in supporting academic vocabulary building for ELLs. If teachers are educated to teach ethnically and linguistically diverse students, student success among ELLs may grow. The implications of this doctoral project study will be to construct a professional development that will increase core subject teachers' knowledge and skills on direct strategies that will increase ELL academic vocabulary building as a project based on the findings of this study.

Summary

To promote effective teaching, professional development and training should be explored. Core subject classroom teachers lack the necessary training to plan and implement direct academic vocabulary instruction for ELL students (Correll, 2016). Direct academic vocabulary instruction involves systematic methods (August et al., 2018). Prior research suggests that such systematic methods may include a connection to academic content (Brandes & McMaster, 2017). Within an academic content area, teaching academic vocabulary would target teaching word parts, using context clues, and self-check activities were documented as effective methods (Haager & Osipova, 2017). ELLs at this suburban southeastern middle school in the United States are reading below grade level, based on World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS)

Reading scores (WIDA Consortium, 2019). The southeastern American school district is the fourth-largest school district in the state and the 81st largest in the nation. ELLs make up 25% of the approximately 54,000 student population within the district. A review of local data was undertaken to understand the problem better. According to the North Carolina Justice Center (2019), schools in the southeastern United States are not appropriately preparing ELL students for success in the classroom and beyond. Although interventions, such as Dual Language Programs and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), have been suggested as means to support ELL elementary children in the learning environment (Ali et al., 2021), the frequency and depth in which districts use these programs vary. Without the implementation of programs that provide focused support to middle school ELL students, teachers are limited in their ability to provide the instruction necessary for them to succeed in school (North Carolina Justice Center, 2019). While research has shown there are more effective ways than concentrating on learning word meaning and word structure to support language learners in the classroom; few studies have explored the barriers that prevent middle school ELLs from adequately developing academic vocabulary skills instruction. Yoon (2021) supported that directly teaching word meanings will improve reading comprehension. Still, more specifically, knowing what a word means, knowing how to define a word, understanding when and how to use the word in context, and the ability to decode that academic vocabulary support reading comprehension (Yoon, 2021). Words taught through direct instruction of word meanings, as well as through discussions about word parts, are especially critical for the academic vocabulary development of ELLs (Kessler et al., 2018). August et al.

(2018) agreed that English learners at the secondary level need consistent academic vocabulary instructional support to access grade-level content and to promote academic vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension skills. There is value in providing academic vocabulary instruction to develop foundational skills of reading, especially for ELLs in the middle grades (Crosson et al., 2019b). Finding what works will be important if ELLs in the focus school of this study are to have any opportunities to become successful readers.

This project study investigates the perceptions of classroom core subject teachers at Middle School 55 about how they are implementing specific instructional model strategies to support direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students. This doctoral study will be used to address the local problem regarding classroom core subject teachers at Middle School 55. The problem is that teachers at Middle School 55 are struggling to implement specific instructional model strategies to support direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students. Without direct teacher academic vocabulary instruction, ELL students who have trouble with academic vocabulary will likely not understand what they are reading in their language arts, science, social studies, or math classes (Haager & Osipova, 2017). When teachers are not offering the appropriate supportive direct instruction, the difference in proficiency in academic vocabulary among ELLs and their classmates assessed with the same standards will persist (Alshahrani, 2019; Richards-Tutor et al., 2016). Investigating the direct instructional academic vocabulary building practices core subject area teachers are using to support the academic demand of ELLs to foster student achievement is essential for meeting the student's needs. In Section 2, I will

expound on the process of how the research study will be conducted. Specifically, the section will have detailed identification of the research design and approach, descriptions of participants and their relevance to the study, and an account of methods that will be used to collect and analyze data.

Section 2: The Methodology

In this section, I explain the doctoral study research methodology, which consists of the research approach design, standards for selecting participants, rationalization of the number of participants, measures for gaining access to participants, description of establishing researcher-participant relationships, protecting participants' rights, data collection, trustworthiness and credibility, data analysis results, emerging themes, and a conclusion. In this study, a basic qualitative research design was used to understand how classroom core subject teachers implement specific instructional model strategies to support explicit vocabulary building for ELL students.

Methodology Overview

This study is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research methods allow researchers to analyze data in the form of natural language and explanations of experiences and social interactions (Levitt et al., 2018). The goal of qualitative analysis is to help organize data into meaningful themes that best represent the experiences and understandings of study participants (Hennink et al., 2020). This methodology was suitable to address the purpose of this study, which was to explore an existing local real-world problem, help collect information pertaining to this problem, and provide strategies that will potentially help reduce or eliminate the problem in this setting.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

In this section, I discuss how I used a qualitative design to understand perceptions of classroom core subject teachers at Middle School 55 regarding their ability to implement specific instructional model strategies to support direct academic vocabulary

building for ELL students. I collected data from core subject area teachers who teach or have taught ELLs and are struggling to implement specific instructional model strategies to support explicit academic vocabulary building for ELL students. I analyzed data to understand core subject teachers' roles in implementing specific instructional model strategies to support direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students. The research questions are:

RQ1: How do core subject area teachers at Middle School 55 effectively implement teaching strategies to support ELL students' academic vocabulary acquisition, retention, and application in math, social studies, and science?

RQ2: What academic resources do core subject teachers perceive they need to effectively provide explicit academic vocabulary instruction for ELLs?

A basic qualitative project study design is suitable when the literature includes limited information about the phenomena and needs further exploration (Erickson, 2018). Thus, a basic qualitative project study design was appropriate.

Description of the Qualitative Tradition

Consideration was given to using both qualitative and quantitative research methods for this study. Researchers use quantitative research to explain events that occur among a targeted group of people (Creswell, 2014). When researchers use quantitative research methods, they usually do so because they are interested in the numerical value of data that is collected (Rana et al., 2021). Qualitative methods are used to explain complex phenomena, as well as evolve and create theories and provide results that are explainable through extensive research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Establishing connections between

attitude and behavior makes qualitative research unique. Qualitative research lends itself to constructivist views that involve how humans make meaning concerning interactions between their experiences and ideas. More specifically, qualitative studies are a framework for social constructivism, whereby individuals seek to understand their world and develop meanings that correspond with their experiences (Ramalho et al., 2015). These connotations do not occur naturally but instead happen when individuals begin to interact with each other (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Language predates concepts and defines how individuals structure the way their world is experienced (Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

Justification for Research Design

For this doctoral study, a qualitative design was applicable. Quantitative methods were considered during the initial planning phase of this study. However, quantitative methods were not appropriate for this study for several reasons. Given the small participant sample, it would be challenging to generalize any numerical data collected for analysis.

Other possible qualitative choices were considered and not chosen, including phenomenology, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, case studies, and narrative inquiry. Those choices were determined to be less appropriate than a basic qualitative project study.

Phenomenology

The phenomenological approach involves exploring a phenomenon in participants' experiences, actions, or reactions from a first-person perspective (Guillén &

Elida, 2019; Nimehchisalem, 2018). Using phenomenology, researchers can focus on single or multiple cases without more rigid requirements (Qutoshi, 2018). There is also the opportunity for the researcher to analyze the phenomenon from a philosophical viewpoint, with an appropriate understanding of how philosophy inherently influences phenomenology (Smith, 2016). Using a purely phenomenological approach was considered to understand participants' experiences in my study. However, this method did not align with the purpose or focus of this study. The study did not intend to solely describe the experiences and outcomes of participant teachers but also explain how teachers use instruction to support the academic vocabulary of ELL students.

Ethnography

The ethnographic model is grounded in anthropology and involves the study of culture and social norms, experiences, and events that are common within a specific community (Kapofu, 2021). More specifically, an ethnographical study design is used to explore meanings that evolve from people's behaviors via social and cultural perspectives (Cortés et al., 2019). The researcher often embeds him or herself in a community to learn dynamics specific to the people in the community (Nimehchisalem, 2018). When considering ethnography, the researcher is directly involved with study participants during their instructional time to identify patterns of behavior that participants shared (Hill, 2017). This study's purpose was not to understand patterns of shared behaviors among participants, so an ethnographic study design was inappropriate.

Grounded Theory

Researchers use grounded theory to collect and analyze data that is used to

develop theories relative to social behaviors, practices, and norms (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). Such theories are, therefore, grounded in the data collected. The development of theories after data collection, instead of before data is collected, is one distinction that sets the grounded theory apart from other research methods (Dunne, 2011). Researchers using grounded theory understand that the data will constantly evolve based on the ever-changing nature of society. The present study does not attempt to build a theory regarding teachers' perception of academic vocabulary instruction. In this study, the specific problem addresses the need to explore the instructional practices of middle school core content teachers of ELLs regarding implementing specific instructional model strategies to support academic vocabulary instruction. Grounded theory was not utilized in this qualitative study. The study's purpose is not to create a theory about teachers' perceptions regarding direct academic vocabulary instruction in core subjects.

Case Study

When using the case study methods, researchers focus on a single individual, group, or phenomenon within a specific context (Rashid et al., 2019). Data collected during a case study is collected from various sources and organized to make more significant generalizations. The case study model allows researchers to look at real-life events to understand any patterns that emerge and, possibly, predict how trends will continue to emerge from the patterns (Noor, 2008). Questions are based on theoretical ideas to then test the conjecture for possible variations (Yin, 2018). While the case study method does have some aspects that align with the goals of my study, I did not look to generalize about participants; instead, I looked for solutions specific to participants in

their individual roles as teachers of ELL students.

Narrative

A narrative model is used to study people or events over expanded periods, with data being collected in real-time. Stories that are created from narrative research are told from the perspective of a select group of people, focusing on their ideas regarding identity, commonly accepted gender roles, religious principles and practices, socioeconomic status, familial relationships, and ethnic or cultural identities in their own words (Ntinda, 2019). It often uses chronological time to record the starting points and situations throughout the experience (Bhattacharya, 2017). A narrative design was not applicable as my data collection did not expand over a significant period and did not focus on chronological time.

My current work did not fit into the qualitative methodology categories identified. Based on the methodology research, I have also found that my study did not fit the quantitative methods criteria. I used a basic qualitative project study design that allowed the investigation of core subject teachers' perceptions of their ability to implement specific instructional model strategies to support direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students (Lowell et al., 2020; Wyche, 2020). A basic qualitative research design allowed me to capture the human experience perspective in my research through interviews with core subject teachers without having to triangulate the data (Babbie, 2017; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018).

Population and Sample

The setting for the study was an urban public middle school in North Carolina.

This school is considered to be low performing based on state and local data, with under 50% of students passing the end-of-grade test in reading (Middle School 55, 2018, 2019a). According to state and local assessment data, I selected the target school because ELL students were below the 40th percentile for reading proficiency (Middle School 55, 2019b). Assessment data included district benchmarks, end-of-grade assessment reports, and the School Report Card issued by the state's public education agency. Furthermore, the target teachers responded in a school survey that they felt underprepared to teach ELLs (Middle School 55, 2019b).

I purposefully sampled the participants, as they were intentionally chosen to participate in the study. The sample group consisted of twelve teachers in grades 6-8 who met the selection criteria, which are: (a) they are core subject area teachers, (b) who are or have taught ELL students, and (c) assert they are underprepared to provide appropriate instruction for their ELL students. By comparing classroom core subject teachers from math, science, and social studies at different grades, varying views could capture different dimensions of academic vocabulary building instructional strategies with ELL students (Etikan et al., 2016).

Number of Participants Justification

No concrete guidelines were developed to determine what is considered an appropriate sample size in qualitative research (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The goal was to select two teachers in each content subject area from sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade core subject teacher participants from math, science, and social studies were invited to participate in the study to show validity in the research.

Procedure for Gaining Access to Participants

This proposed qualitative study was made feasible through a collaboration agreement between Walden University and the local school district. I contacted the Salem Public Schools' human resources administrator to seek approval to access participants and conduct the study. The human resources administrator for Salem Public Schools has the authority to approve the study. A copy of the consent form was hand-delivered to the Salem Public Schools' central office human resources administrator, requesting participant access and site approval to conduct the study. I also attached with the approval request an outline and overview of the study, the purpose of the study, and the methodology that was used to collect data. When the human resources administrator granted full approval, a formal request for teachers' participation in the study was made via email invitation. To maintain confidentiality and protect teachers' identity as study participants, I distributed a link to a JotForm, through which the participants privately accepted my invitation to participate in the study. In the form, an explanation was included that confidentiality would be maintained by using the specific alphanumeric code SP that would be followed by two-digit numbers starting with 01 so that direct attribution cannot be applied to any study participant or the school from which data was being collected.

Upon the participants understanding of the process for maintaining confidentiality, I also distributed a consent form for teachers to sign, scan and return to me via e-mail if they were willing to participate. Follow-up communication via email or telephone was conducted with teachers who returned a signed consent form to me to

schedule a meeting at their chosen location. Each participant met with me via a Zoom meeting after their formal work hours ended. The purpose of the study, how data was collected, and the significance of the problem that I was researching were discussed. Prior to the interview, I reviewed the contents of the consent form to ensure participants understood their rights during the study, including the right to revoke consent or decline to continue participating in the study at any time. Participants received an overview of the research study written in simple terms so that participants have some idea of what to expect in the interview, making the interview less formal by asking participants about their perspectives and interests regarding a variety of topics and constructing questions in a way that was more conversational rather than rigid (McGrath et al., 2019). Participants were interviewed separately to maintain the highest levels of confidentiality.

Establishing Rapport

I intended to make each participant's interview session as comfortable as possible. The rapport between the researcher and the participants was imperative during the research interview (Sivell et al., 2019). Participants would likely give more forthcoming, genuine responses if they connected closely with the researcher (McGrath et al., 2019; Wa-Mbaleka et al., 2019). To be candid about my role as the researcher, a thorough explanation was given to the participants that I would be the primary data collection instrument as the principal researcher for this study. This required me to primarily listen to their responses, ask relevant follow-up questions, and take notes. Each participant understood that my reason for using an interview protocol during the interviews was to promote the fidelity of the data that I was collecting.

I told the participants of their immeasurable value as interviewees in the study and how their responses would hopefully inform changes that would benefit ELL students by supporting their teachers. Professionalism and respect were maintained throughout the interview to help facilitate a positive relationship between the researcher and the study participants. At the end of the interview session, each participant was thanked for their willingness to be involved in the study. With the inclusion of each of the steps mentioned to build the researcher-participant relationship, participants hopefully felt greater ease about giving an unrestricted account of how they provide direct instruction for ELLs in their classrooms.

Participants' Rights and Protections

Research ethics were always maintained during the study and after the study had been completed. A review of the contents of the consent form was given to provide insurance that participants understood their rights during the study, including the right to revoke consent or decline to continue participating in the study at any time. The second review of the consent form was done during my meeting session with participants after receiving a signed consent to participate form from them. Each participant was asked to affirm that their involvement would be voluntary. The integrity of the data collected was maintained through confidentiality of participants' identities, participants' responses, and the name of the school from which I collected data.

Training on research protocols was completed prior to submitting my study to the Internal Review Board (IRB) for approval. The training, *Protecting Human Research Participants*, is designed by the National Institutes of Health so that researchers

understand the legal, ethical, and moral responsibilities of conducting research. I demonstrated my commitment to protecting the participants in my study by reiterating to each study participant that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Explanations were given to each participant on how their identities, the identity of the study site, and all information collected would be protected before, during, and after the study was conducted. Such protection included assigning a unique alpha-numeric code to each participant, preceded with the letter SP for the study participant. A double-digit number followed the SP, indicating the order in which I collected data from each teacher. An example of a code I used was SP01, referring to the first study participant interviewed. Thereafter, the order of participants was SP02 for the second participant and SP03 for the third participant, with a number assigned accordingly until all participants were interviewed. Names were not used in any manner or in any discussions with school administrators, district personnel, or anyone else.

I met my responsibility to further protect participants by electronically storing all study-related materials, including interview transcripts. The data is a password-protected file on my home-based computer. Data files stored on my computer are also encrypted, ensuring no one else would have access to the data. Any paper or non-electric data is stored in a secure lockbox with a copy of the combination secured through password protection and encryption on my home computer. Data will be kept secure for five years, per the protocol of Walden University. After five years, I will destroy all data collected.

Data Collection

Data collected were from core subject teachers who teach ELLs using a basic qualitative design. Each participant was interviewed using a 45-60 minute semistructured interview that encouraged the participants to directly answer the open-ended questions posed and offer additional insights that would provide richer insights for their responses (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Robinson, 2014). The collected data focused on these teachers' perceptions regarding their ability to implement specific instructional model strategies to support direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students. During the interviews, I used the open-ended interview protocol (see Appendix B). To guarantee the validity of the questionnaire, the interview protocol was submitted to a committee of experts for review. All review panel members are experts with 10-15 years of experience providing instructional support for ELL students. They asserted that the questions on interview protocol were appropriate and aligned with the conceptual framework and the research questions for this qualitative study.

The qualitative research interview is an important data collection tool for an assortment of methods used within the wide-ranging spectrum of educational research (Bowen, 2009; Rule & John, 2015). Using a semistructured interview approach allowed teachers to share the ways in which they are increasing their pedagogic knowledge and instructional strategies for the teaching and learning of ELLs (McGrath et al., 2019). As a result, responses were believed to be more authentic and less restrictive. I recorded participants' responses to the interview questions in a research journal, the contents of which were not shared with anyone else. Names of participants were not included in the

journal, as codes were used to correctly match participants with their responses later in the data analysis process. Notes were made in the journal throughout the interview of any themes or ideas that were noticeably repetitive throughout the individual interviews as well as common among participants' responses. Using a semistructured, one-on-one interview approach and a research journal added to the descriptive nature of this qualitative study analysis (Creswell, 2014). I wanted to keep the participants informed of progress throughout the study by notifying them by email once I began data analysis and after data analysis was concluded. Each participant had my contact information, including my email and phone number, in the event that they had questions about their involvement in the study. A scheduled time was set for each participant to review transcripts from the interviews that had been conducted with them for the purpose of member checking. During the member checking process, participants were allowed to review only their individual interview transcripts and audio recordings for accuracy.

Data Collection Instrumentation

Semistructured interviews were the foundation of the data collection instrumentation. Interviews were the only means of data collection for this basic qualitative study. Participants were provided access to the interview protocol (see Appendix B) that I used in my study. The semistructured questions were used because these types of questions allowed participants to respond to the questions without being restricted by pre-determined answer choices (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Pre-determined choices are common in closed questions, where participants can select their responses from a list or rating scale (Allen, 2017; Moser & Korstjens, 2018); however,

semistructured interviews allow the researcher to use more autonomy when phrasing and replying to the interview questions (Merriam, 2014). I consulted with ELL administrators and veteran teachers to create questions that would encourage reliable and valid responses from the study participants.

Before conducting the interview, I discussed the rights to confidentiality with participants, including the omission of any information that would identify them in the study. The goal was to encourage an in-depth, meaningful interview with the participants without fearing their identities would be at risk of exposure in the study. Participants were also reminded that they could withdraw from the study at will without consequences (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The interviews were recorded with an audio recording device via Zoom with the permission of each participant. Recording the interview using an audio-recording device allowed me to engage more with the interviewee rather than being distracted by taking extensive notes (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Each participant had the right to object to being recorded before, during, and after the interview. No participant voiced any objection to being interviewed or recorded during the data collection.

Sufficiency of Data Collection

Purposeful sampling was used to gain a deeper understanding of the opinion and perceptions provided by each participant (Ames et al., 2019). This intentional sampling allowed me to gather quality, meaningful data from a select group of individuals (Ames et al., 2019) who had provided instruction for ELL students. I was certain that rich data was collected from the chosen sample of participants. After interviews had been

conducted, responses were transcribed, and member checked. When duplicated responses amongst participants without any new data had been found, I concluded that: (1) saturation had been reached, (2) sampling could end, and (3) data that had been collected from the interviews is a solid representation of which relevant conclusions could be drawn (Sebele-Mpofu, 2020). Once the transcribed data was organized, the data analysis process to identify emerging themes began.

As a doctoral candidate at Walden University, I partnered with an urban school district in the Southeast to investigate classroom core subject teachers' perceptions of their ability to implement specific instructional model strategies to support direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students. Data was collected from interviews conducted with 12 middle school core subject teachers. Each core subject teacher participant was asked to complete one interview about instructional practices that build academic vocabulary for ELLs, and a second interview would not be needed. The interview duration was 45-60 minutes, with the time spent determined by the extensiveness of participants' responses. Prior to the commencement of each interview, teachers were informed of their right to ask for clarification if needed. They were asked if clarification was needed periodically during the interview process. At the end of the interviews, reflective follow-up questions were asked that allowed participants to provide additional thoughts or elaborate on previous responses. Zoom interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Before conducting the interviews, the participants were notified of the processes on the remote consent forms. I instructed participants to respond to 12

interview questions. The interview questionnaire (see Appendix B) included various questions to obtain information, ideas, thoughts, feelings, and reactions.

Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) Miner is a data analysis software that can be used to analyze and code data from qualitative studies (George Mason University, 2021). The QDA Miner data analysis software was utilized to organize the data collected and code responses to the research questions (Sechelski & Onwuegbuzie, 2019). After completing the interviews, I began the work of reading and transcribing the recorded interviews (Creswell, 2014). The data collected during the study was solely used for the purpose of the project study. During this process, information about the researcher's background could be shared, including teaching experiences, trainings obtained, and how the interviews would be structured. In my role as the researcher, I am the only individual who will have access to these materials during the five-year period.

After I received written approval (Approval #: 01-05-22-0637900) to conduct my study from the Institutional Review Board at Walden University, I gained access to 12 middle school core subject teachers. An application form written to the district's review board was completed, and an email was sent directly to the school district's evaluation program supervisor in the research department to request permission to conduct my study formally. The request included a comprehensive description of the study. I asked the district to provide a preliminary letter stating approval to conduct the research once Walden University approved my request. The document was submitted to Walden University's IRB for final approval upon receiving district consent. Once final approval was obtained from Walden IRB, the district's superior notified middle schools willing to

participate in my study. The appropriate principal received an email expressing gratitude for allowing me to conduct my study, including the remote interview consent form for their review. I requested participation in my study via email invitation with permission from the principal of Middle School 55. After explaining the study's purpose, teachers who are interested in participating were invited to contact me via email. After presenting my request to participate, I waited one week for sufficient responses. After the first week, I did not receive sufficient responses. At that point, I used publicly listed email addresses in the district database and sent a reminder invitation email to teachers at Middle School 55 to participate in the study. Teachers who were eligible based on the selection criteria and who agreed to participate in the study signed the consent forms electronically and returned them via email. If a reply was not received from the potential participants after one week, I sent a follow-up email and an additional invitation. This process was repeated until a sample of twelve core subject teachers responded and agreed. The interview consent form described the study's purpose, participant expectations, data collection procedures, and confidentiality methods. The interview consent form also included clear indications that their research involvement was solely on a volunteer basis. I also assured them that their identity would remain confidential through the complete data collection and reporting process. Consenting participants received a follow-up email that allowed them to choose from a list of times to schedule the Zoom interview and used a different email for contact. Accommodations were made for the participants if offered times were not feasible. Before each interview, I explained the participants' rights and offered them an opportunity to ask questions for clarification.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a middle-school teacher allowed me to build a rapport with the study participants. My part did not influence my ability to collect reliable and valid data because I did not have a professional or personal relationship with the teacher participants. Additionally, my role as the researcher in this project study was to select and interview the participants, record the responses, document the transcripts, and analyze the data and participants' perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). I asked questions that helped answer the research questions and interpret the responses by identifying emergent themes (Ames et al., 2019). The emerging data themes were used to understand what conclusions surfaced from the interviews and revealed and discussed possible new directions for further data collection.

Data Analysis

With a qualitative approach, it is possible to analyze data as it is being collected as opposed to waiting until after data collection has occurred (Lowell et al., 2020). In my analysis of the data, I began identifying any commonalities in participants' responses to the interview questions. Finding commonalities was useful for identifying and understanding additional themes that were not previously considered. For example, a common theme in ELL students' literature was teachers' attitudes and beliefs about teaching students who speak other languages (Castaneda, 2020; Rizzuto, 2017; Warren, 2018). During the interview process, many teachers may express that they lack the appropriate training to teach ELL students effectively and are interested in receiving such training (Castaneda, 2020; Warren, 2018). Additionally, teachers may predominately

point to a lack of parent involvement as a barrier to ELL students' success (Warren, 2018). As a result, a preliminary analysis of the data did not show a lack of interest in training and a lack of parent support as possible themes or subthemes in the research.

I analyzed the data from my transcription and looked for any common themes presented in the interviews. Coding was used to identify issues established in the literature and knowledge about the direct instruction framework (Male, 2016). Coding is a way for the researcher to sort through the data and make sense of it concerning the research questions (Elliott, 2018). A priori, open, and axial coding were used to identify, analyze, organize, describe, and report themes found within the data set (Nowell et al., 2017). The data analysis was completed by analyzing the protocol questions developed before the interview and by employing questions directed by the coding process. I used a priori coding aligned to the conceptual framework; then, open coding was used that included all data collected. The coding process was finalized with axial coding to interpret the results of the interview responses. The recorded interview transcriptions were downloaded and saved on my password-protected computer in a word document. Data from the protected word document was coded and analyzed within two days of completing the interviews. The transcribed audio Zoom recordings were sent to the participants for their review to confirm the accuracy of the response recorded in the transcripts (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

A Priori Coding of Interview Data

The initial stage of the analysis involved reading all the interview transcripts twice to acquaint myself with the data responses without writing any notes or creating

any codes. My next step was to re-read each transcript. During the second step, I re-read the data and recorded my preliminary impressions. A priori codes were used first, which were developed based on the conceptual framework. The a priori codes consisted of the constructs of direct instruction. Before examining the data in detail, I discovered the following a priori codes: (a) including planning and design, (b) delivery and management, and (c) evaluation and assessment (Engelmann, 1980). I coded these constructs in every transcribed interview. The transcriptions' margins were annotated to interpret various details about the a priori coding (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). I used a priori codes because they were instrumental in distinguishing patterns and themes that aligned with the conceptual framework while incorporating middle school core subject teachers' instructional academic vocabulary practices for ELLs. I expected the data examined to be aligned with a priori codes already existing as they relate to instructional vocabulary instructional strategies.

Open Coding of Interview Data

I began looking for emerging codes during my third reading of the data. After I finished the a priori coding, my readings of the data continued while I used open coding to organize the results. These results identified additional themes as they evolved from the data (Cho & Lee, 2014). Examples of these themes were: teacher belief in their knowledge/strategies for ELL vocabulary building completed professional development/training and the need for specific training for ELLs. During the next level of coding, I used my journal to continue organizing the data, which allowed me to assess the transcripts easily and quickly. Displaying prominent information such as participants’

assigned identification, their applicable content area, and grade level was beneficial in my development of themes. One of the techniques identified for discovering research themes that were used in my analysis was reading and re-reading the data, with emerging codes added to existing codes (Wolff et al., 2018). Next, after listening to the transcriptions, my next step was coding the themes and concepts (Creswell, 2014). The a priori code were compared with the open codes created from the data. The open coding was organized into categories that developed into themes.

Axial Coding of Interview Data

After completing a priori and open coding, I used axial coding because it was important to generate categories and examine connections found in the data (Scott & Medaugh, 2017). Axial coding offered an opportunity for the research questions to be addressed by producing a picture of what academic vocabulary instructional practices, from the teachers' perspective, correlate with the improved ELL academic performance in the core academic subjects. After the categories became apparent, axial coding was used to distinguish relationships within each category. The axial coding resulted in themes that revealed the content teachers' sentiments about academic vocabulary instructional practices and their understanding of which practices foster core subject academic vocabulary building. Some of those themes included: basic ELL strategies used and collaboration with colleagues. Axial coding allowed me to record and identify responses from the interviews linked by a common theme or idea, thus allowing the results to be categorized based on their commonalities (Assarroudi et al., 2018).

Evidence of Quality of Procedures

After I analyzed the data, each participant received a copy of their interview transcript to review for accuracy. Having participants review their individual transcripts helped establish my study's findings' trustworthiness, validity, and credibility.

Trustworthiness

According to Stahl and King (2020), trustworthiness is defined as the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods that are used to ensure the quality of the study. To establish trustworthiness, if a participant identified any response errors in the transcription, the error was corrected in a collaborative effort. The participants were allowed an additional opportunity to review a revised copy of the transcript and audio recordings. The member checking process was used to ensure that what I wrote was what the participants intended to say. Member checking allows the researcher to verify participant responses by asking questions to clarify different aspects of the study (Creswell, 2014). Trustworthiness is also about establishing validity and credibility, which are described in more detail below.

Credibility

Credibility is confirmed when the research findings represent believable information depicted from the participants' original data and is an accurate interpretation of the participants' original views and thoughts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I also ensured credibility through member checking. Member checking can decrease researcher biases to ensure that the participant's views are recorded truthfully (Stahl & King, 2020). I also used peer debriefing to establish credibility. Peer debriefing

is using a scholar or scholars who are outside the context of the study but have a general grasp of the nature of the study and with whom you can review perceptions, insights, and analyze the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Using peer debriefing helped uncover bias and assumptions in the research study. I ensured that each participant had my contact information if they needed to ask questions or make any comments. Moreover, the participants' review of the data was used to confirm that my personal biases were not represented in the study and ensured that their ideas and experiences were reflected appropriately in the results.

Validity

Validity refers to how precisely an instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Mustafa, 2021). I created an interview questionnaire to use for the study. To guarantee the validity of the interview questions and the study findings, the interview protocol was presented to a committee of professionals for review. All review team members are experts with 10-15 years of experience providing instructional support for ELL students. They contended that the questions on the interview protocol were appropriate and aligned with the conceptual framework and the research questions for this qualitative study. They ensured that the instrument method and measurement technique were high quality and on target to measure exactly what it was intended to measure.

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant cases were addressed by searching for patterns discovered within the data coding. Researchers must understand the importance of identifying and analyzing

data inconsistencies within a data set to establish the validity of the testing in qualitative research (Collins & Stockton, 2018). Discrepant cases can also consist of deviations or inconsistencies with the originally developed categories, research questions, or themes (Rose & Johnson, 2020). I addressed discrepant cases in my study by looking for patterns found in the coding and themes of the data. All perspectives and possibilities were discussed in the research outcomes, as some participants had contrasting interpretations of the same topic.

Assumptions

The study site was a suburban southeastern middle school in the United States for this project study. There were various middle schools in the district with core subject teachers teaching ELLs. I assumed that teaching ELLs in the core content areas requires specific strategies as they have limited vocabulary in most content core subjects. I also assumed that ELLs are learners who bring diverse cultural experiences and language learning barriers to the learning process and who may benefit from specific direct instruction.

Data Analysis Results

The problem explored through this study is that content area teachers (math, social studies, and science) at Middle School 55 are struggling to implement specific instructional model strategies to support explicit content area academic vocabulary building for ELL students. The implications of this project study were that the local district could effectively support the use of direct instructional strategies by

implementing specialized professional development. To find evidence of themes, the project study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do core subject area teachers at Middle School 55 effectively implement teaching strategies to support ELL students' academic vocabulary acquisition, retention, and application in math, social studies, and science?

RQ2: What academic resources do core subject teachers perceive they need to effectively provide explicit academic vocabulary instruction for ELLs?

I analyzed data to identify core content subject area-specific instructional model strategies to support direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students. Content area teachers, in general, believed they had not received enough training to support ethnically and linguistically diverse students. Consequently, teachers in the content areas may not have knowledge of instructional strategies that support specific instructional model strategies for direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students. With the findings from my study, core subject teachers may increase their knowledge and skills to support direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students in the core subject classroom. If core subject teachers have the needed knowledge and skills to support academic vocabulary building for ELL students, the chance of helping the ELLs to be successful throughout the school will be significantly increased.

Review Process for Data

The data provided for this study was collected over a 4-week period. I interviewed 12 classroom core subject teachers via Zoom who currently work or have worked with ELL students in math, science, or social studies at an urban middle school in a southern

state. It is my assertion that these teachers may be under-prepared to provide appropriate research-based instruction for their ELL students. I ensured participants' privacy by conducting the Zoom sessions in a private location to prevent interviews from being overheard by others. Before beginning the interview, I discussed with each participant the procedures I would take to ensure their privacy was maintained. The participants were assured they would not be named. To ensure anonymity, each participant would be assigned letters or numbers to maintain confidentiality.

The data collected for this doctoral study was recorded, transcribed, organized, analyzed, and coded for themes based on the constructs of the framework of direct instruction (beliefs about vocabulary instruction for ELLs in the core subject areas). According to Herzog et al. (2019), data analysis should contain excerpts of interview quotes that most effectively represent distinct themes that surface from the analysis. As I started collecting data, I began by writing down participants' recordings from interviews into a Microsoft Word Document within days of conducting the interview. Cassell and Bishop (2019) suggested that unprocessed data collected in a qualitative case must be transcribed before they are accessible for analysis. I conducted my data analysis personally, by hand, so that I had a deep understanding of the information I collected. For teacher's interviews, I used an interview protocol (Appendix B). The interview questions focused on participants' experiences with ELL students and any training provided for vocabulary instruction for ELL students in core content areas.

The first step in my data analysis process was to read each interview's transcripts at least three times over the course of several days. I decided to read transcripts over an

extended period so that I could have a fresh analysis during each reading. After reading each transcript, I began analyzing using the a priori themes from the conceptual framework with the constructs of direct instruction: (a) including planning and design, (b) delivery and management, and (c) evaluation and assessment (Engelmann, 1980). I physically coded the constructs in each participant's script from every transcribed interview as planned. I began arranging codes into potential themes, and the highlighted themes developed from the coding process. Throughout the coding process, I organized all data into small chunks to clearly handle the coding process. The transcripts were thoroughly analyzed for developing themes throughout the data analysis. As a part of the process, I noted any words or phrases that appeared consistently throughout the interviews, recognizing specific quotes that strengthened the codes (Elliott, 2018).

After evaluating all the data, I began with different codes that were later used to develop the major themes for this doctoral study. The themes were specific to the perceptions of classroom core subject teachers of their ability to implement specific instructional model strategies to support direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students. The discoveries included any emerging (open) themes and the constructs from the framework. During this process, I arranged the data by detecting patterns, similarities, and themes relevant to this doctoral study's focus. The data were analyzed through multiple readings to look for possible themes applicable to the constructs of the framework and research questions of this study.

Procedures to Ensure Accuracy and Credibility of Findings

To ensure data was accurate and credible in this doctoral project study, participant data were collected from interviews and recorded via zoom. Ravitch and Carl (2019) supported that a research study is valid when the data has been collected and interpreted accurately to reflect and represent the participants' responses. The information was gathered through interviews to confirm and establish credibility. The data was collected and analyzed most accurately to embody the teacher participants' feelings, thoughts, and ideas effectively and correctly. Nassaji (2020) noted that credibility is contingent upon how researchers can truthfully represent what participants believe, feel, and carry out during the data collection process.

My efforts to prevent biases in this doctoral project study included the utilization of an open-ended interview protocol (see Appendix B) so that participants were given the opportunity to provide extended responses to the questions asked throughout the interview. Additional action was taken to ensure validity, an essential component in a research project study, by utilizing member checking. A scheduled time was allotted for each participant to review the transcriptions from the interviews that had been conducted with them for the purpose of member checking. During the member checking procedure, participants were allowed to review only their individual interview transcripts and audio recordings for truthfulness. During this process, participants had the chance to add or remove anything they believed did not precisely represent their responses (Candela, 2019) and provide practical feedback on the initial codes and themes. The participants in the interviews agreed that the codes and themes from their respective interviews were

valid. Member checking allowed me, as the researcher, to ensure the research met the standards of credibility.

The explicit instruction framework for effective and efficient teaching developed by Becker and Engelmann (1973a, 1973b, 1976)'s conceptual framework was used to guide this study. This framework aligns with this study to understand how teachers implement specific instructional model strategies to support explicit vocabulary building for ELL students. The framework exemplifies six research-based principles and functions as a catalyst for structuring meaningful vocabulary connections regularly throughout the academic year. The explicit instruction framework is intended as a tool to support teacher participants in this study, helping them identify the most effective practices for helping ELL students develop content area vocabulary.

The overall results of this doctoral project study revealed that core subject area teachers had not received adequate professional development focused on improving the use of specific instructional strategies to support direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students effectively. Some of the interview participants felt more confident about teaching ELLs because they had obtained more ELL-specific training and the foundation of a higher education, which required reading more educational research articles that included the education of ELLs. However, most of the teachers were not confident about the strategies they used when working with ELLs. Even participants who felt self-confident in their abilities to work with ELLs revealed a need for a more differentiated and personalized professional development that focuses solely on ELLs' vocabulary instruction. Some teachers expressed that they had never had a professional training that

focused on ELL, even though they have taught ELL in some capacity for six or more years.

Themes and Descriptions

In this doctoral project study, I utilized a basic qualitative study research design to attain an in-depth understanding of how core content subject area teachers are executing specific instructional model strategies to support direct instruction for content area academic vocabulary building for ELL students. All participants were selected to participate in the doctoral study based on specific criteria. I emailed invitations to teachers to volunteer to participate in the study who were a) middle-school core subject teachers in one of the following areas: math, science, or social studies, b) are presently teaching or have taught ELL students, and c) assert they may be under-prepared to provide appropriate research-based instruction for their ELL students. The data collection process relied on one-on-one interviews. All interviews used a semistructured interview protocol which allowed me to stay concentrated throughout the interview process to gain a deep understanding of what type of specific vocabulary instructional strategies middle school core subject teachers may have implemented to support the academic vocabulary needs of ELLs and their perceptions of their capabilities to teach ELL students in content area classes, and how professional trainings have offered support in teaching vocabulary to ELLs. After meticulously analyzing the data, I created a table for the emerging themes and codes. In Table 2 below, I cataloged the themes aligned with the research questions or the conceptual framework. The number of occurrences identified the various themes and codes from the data.

Table 2

Codes and Themes and Occurrences from Interviews

Themes	Codes	Number of Occurrences
Teacher belief in their knowledge/strategies for ELL vocabulary building	Proficient	8
	Developing	3
	Accomplished	1
Completed professional development/training	None	5
	Sit & Get Information	2
	SIOP Model during Learning Teams	3
	Interactive PD focused solely on ELL	2
Basic ELL strategies used	Technology Games	1
	Buzz words from SIOP	1
	Realia	6
Collaboration with colleagues	District Specialists	2
	School Personnel	4
Need for specific training for ELLs	Vocabulary	10
	Cultural awareness	3
Teachers' beliefs of ELLs learning ability	All students can grow academically	12
	Students learn differently	12

Table 2 helped me organize and analyze the data more truthfully and effectively, connecting the themes with the framework and research questions. When each transcript was coded, the codes from each transcript were combined and categorized into themes based on similarity, reducing the codes into a smaller number of categories to be analyzed. The themes included teacher belief in their knowledge/strategies for ELL

vocabulary building, completed professional development and training, basic ELL strategies used, collaboration with ESL colleagues, need for specific training for ELLs, and teachers' beliefs of ELLs learning ability.

Findings from RQ1

This doctoral study aimed to investigate how content area teachers at Middle School 55 perceived their abilities to effectively use specific instructional model strategies to support direct academic vocabulary building for ELL students. I analyzed the interview responses to align with Becker and Engelmann's (1978) principles of direct instruction. The principles include: (1) optimize engaged time/time on task, (2) promote high levels of success, (3) increase content coverage, (4) scaffold instruction, (5) more time in instructional groups, and (6) address different forms of knowledge (Engelmann, 1999). Three findings emerged from the data analysis from research question one. First, participants stated their belief in their knowledge of ELL vocabulary-building strategies. Second, participants reported their current trainings on instructional strategies to meet ELLs' academic vocabulary needs. Third, teachers reported the types of basic ELL strategies they currently use in the core classroom.

Theme 1

The first theme that emerged from the data related to the teacher's self-assessment regarding their knowledge of evidence-based instructional strategies for ELLs. Additionally, the first emerging theme connected participants' confidence levels when providing vocabulary instruction to ELL students. Most participating teachers believed they required more skills to support ELLs in core content area subjects. The data revealed

that three out of twelve teachers stated they were developing in this area; eight out of 12 teachers expressed they were proficient, and one teacher revealed that they were accomplished. The developing teacher agreed that they might exemplify the skills anticipated of a teacher who may be new to the profession, a veteran teacher who is working in a brand-new content area or grade level, or who requires a new skill to be competent at the next level. The teachers that disclosed that they were proficient believed that they inconsistently demonstrated basic competence with the implementation of strategies but required more work to practice and support a consistent implementation. The accomplished teacher expressed that they had an above-average foundation, was knowledgeable of, and consistently implemented vocabulary strategies for their ELL students. The self-identified accomplished teacher continued reading articles on effective researched-based strategies. Moreover, they participated and sought their own professional development outside of those offered in the local district, which provided them with ELL instructional strategies they need to become an effective teacher.

For the purpose of this study, anonymity and confidentiality were accomplished by assigning each teacher the letters SP (study participant) along with a number that was unique to each participant. The accomplished teacher, SP08, who teaches science, believed that education on academic strategies, specific professional development, collaboration with their ELL colleagues and specialists, as well as connections with parents of ELLs prepared them to become highly successful core content teachers. Teachers who reported that they believed in their proficient abilities to work with ELL students on vocabulary building reported that they have participated in one to three

professional development trainings provided by the local district. However, the teachers felt that the district-sponsored professional development had little influence on the way they implement vocabulary strategies to ELLs. As SP12 (study participant) stated,

> In the past 5 years…I would say I have attended maybe two PDs and that focused on best teaching practices to support EL vocabulary development. Both were at different sites. The PD was more informational (sit-and-get). I have read one or two research based articles other than the professional development offered.

SPO7, also a social studies teacher stated:

> Although I have had five-six professional training and education, most of the trainings focused primarily on exceptional children's strategies with an insert of vague strategies that may be used to support vocabulary development in the core content areas.

Through their responses to the interview questions, SPO2, a math teacher, affirmed that they have had five professional development that involved specific strategies to implement for ELLs. The trainings were facilitated by English as a Second Language (ESL)specialists during professional learning team meetings. During these meetings, the ESL specialists involved attending teachers in interactive strategies that support ELL vocabulary building. SPO2 stated,

> I am very assured in my capability to meet the needs of the ELL students I teach due to the specific ELL training, experience, and education I have completed. I have taught middle school ELL students for many years and have attended a variety of ELL PD that helps me become effective in teaching our ELLs.

Theme 2

After analyzing the teacher's interview responses, the data revealed that all core content area teachers benefitted from education, training, and experiences that focused specifically on research-based strategies to support ELLs in the classroom. The accessibility of professional development opportunities could positively change the perspectives of all content area teachers about their ability to implement content area vocabulary for ELLs. Research suggests that ELLs in secondary grades will struggle in all content area classes, regardless of content, if they do not have adequate vocabulary skills. Reflectively, teachers of all core content areas need to implement similar vocabulary acquisition and instructional strategies to promote academic growth among ELLs that matches the growth of their non-ELL peers (Elleman et al., 2019; Gallagher et al., 2019).

Furthermore, some of the teachers who stated they were proficient in their teaching abilities asserted that they were persistent in seeking professional growth and additional professional development opportunities whenever possible. They realized that training and professional development could enhance their knowledge and skills in implementing ELL content vocabulary. The findings suggested that professional development programs that engaged teachers in comprehensive, direct instruction strategies for core vocabulary could improve students' learning experiences in the core content subject area classroom.

On the one hand, teachers believed that explicit vocabulary instruction was beneficial for all students, with ELLs having a greater need for such instruction.

However, responses in data revealed that many teachers do not believe in their abilities to implement vocabulary strategies for ELL in the core classroom. Participating teachers agreed that focusing on content-specific vocabulary development and modified instructional practices significantly improves ELL academic success.

Three out of twelve teachers rated themselves as developing in their abilities to provide core academic vocabulary instruction to ELLs in regular education. These twelve teachers related their "developing" abilities to 0 – 1 professional training during their teaching career. Teachers who were not confident in their abilities to implement vocabulary strategies stated that they had not received any ELL-focused PDs in the last five years. This likely impacted how participants rated their abilities to provide core content vocabulary instruction to ELLs. Participants stated that having access to professional development and professional learning teams that focused on ELL strategies would provide much-needed guidance on how they should teach and incorporate content area vocabulary strategies that effectively support the growth of the ELLs. For instance, SP06, another math teacher, stated:

> I believe that I have not been sufficiently trained or prepared to teach ELLs specifically. I frequently pay no attention to their needs because I am unfamiliar with the strategies to implement with them or where to start, nor do I have time to seek strategies to implement. Participant SP01 was a math teacher that also affirmed that they had not received any ELL PD or training in the last five years, and as a result may be affecting the way strategies are implemented to ELL in the core content areas of math.

Theme 3

Additionally, teachers who felt proficient or accomplished in their abilities to teach ELLs in regular education, discussed the types of basic instructional strategies they implemented to support the academic vocabulary needs of their ELLs. Participants stated that they felt confident and prepared to work with ELLs. However, their strategies were not specifically for ELL students. Participants cited restraints on time and planning as barriers to implementing specific strategies for ELL students. For example, SP11 stated:

> The strategies I use are for all students, which include exceptional students, ELLs, and students not on grade level. Those strategies include, buzz words, scaffolding, pre-teaching, guided practice, and gradual release based on individualized needs of students.

The data also revealed that many teachers' basic strategies used for ELLs in conjunction with all other students may not be adequate to help vocabulary building of ELLs. Strategies such as word walls, illustrations or realia, roots words, cognates, and modifying assignments are basic strategies that ultimately meet ELL students' needs. SP12 also stated, "Yes, I work with other EL teacher to modify assignments and grading practices based on the level of the individual students."

One participant revealed that they used SIOP strategies for ELLs in the past but did not find it effective as the model focuses on single-culture classrooms where students are second and foreign language learners. SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation

Protocol) is an instructional model that is implemented to address the academic needs of English learners. SP03 stated,

> I have used some examples from SIOP however, I have not found many of them useful, so I revert to what I have used to include strategies in my classroom. Using technology interactive games as a resource was a reported by nine of 12 teachers.

Teachers revealed that they used interactive websites as tools for students to practice vocabulary independently, outside of direct instruction. Platforms such as PearDeck, Google Docs, and iReady, Kahoot, Quizlet were used for notes, translating dictionaries, and some core lessons. These were reported as supplemental tools that ELLs use as learning independent resources that are not individualized for the needs or levels of the ELL's language or vocabulary ability. SP07, a science teacher, stated:

> I use games that help students learn English, but they focus on different skills, not just vocabulary. Student are given a time to work independently on these skills. I also use Wizer and Quizziz for assessments for all students.

Another theme that emerged from the results was the use of generally applied strategies when teaching ELLs. The term generally applied was used to identify strategies that were used for everyone in the classroom regardless of students' individual needs. These strategies may be beneficial for the overall classroom objective; however, the ELL students were not showing significant growth in comparison to their non-ELL peers. Participants were candid in their responses, admitting that the generally applied strategies they used to build students' vocabulary skills were ineffective for their ELL students.

According to participants' responses, their ELLs did not show any growth in their vocabulary skills when generally applied strategies were used.

Many ELL students enter classrooms with strong vocabulary skills in their home language. However, this does not necessarily mean that they will successfully acquire vocabulary in the second language (Hunt & Feng, 2016). The differences in their home language and English language conventions may pose remarkable challenges to ELLs' abilities to acquire second language vocabulary skills. In fact, ELLs enter school with more limited English-language vocabularies compared to non-ELL students (Gallagher et al., 2019). ELLs in secondary grades will struggle in their core subject area classes if they do not have adequate vocabulary-building strategies.

Findings from RQ2

Like RQ1, I analyzed interview responses based on the principles of direct instruction. The findings provided an understanding of what academic resources core subject teachers perceive they need to effectively provide explicit academic vocabulary instruction for ELLs. Three findings from research question two also emerged from the interview responses. First, participants stated that collaboration with colleagues was a key component in ELL vocabulary development. Second, the participants said that there a need for more specific training for ELL's instructional strategies. Third, participants expressed that all students have the capacity to learn, despite factors that may be present.

Theme 1

All twelve teacher participants believed that positive collaboration between ESL and classroom teachers could encourage core content area classroom instruction by

implementing strategies offered by ESL teachers. This theme is supported by Green (2019), who suggested that educators would better serve their diverse student populations by learning about and accommodating students' cultural heritage and evolving students' traditional ways of interacting with others. Cultural competence can be encouraged by providing professional development opportunities and assisting in the positive collaboration between teachers, faculty, and culturally knowledgeable professionals will improve the quality of instruction and the overall success of students. D'Haem and Griswold (2017) agreed, emphasizing that partnerships and collaboration among educators are critical. The challenges that must be overcome include barriers to teaching and learning caused by the diverse backgrounds and experiences among teachers and students. Further challenges will likely occur with teachers' abilities to effectively educate while understanding cultural diversity.

Giles and Yazan, 2019 found that ESL and content teachers' collaboration was still not a continual teaching practice, mainly in core subject area classrooms. The authors reported critical need areas, including challenging teacher beliefs, schedule conflicts, and school-based support. Giles and Yazan supported the idea that ESL and core content subject area teachers needed to engage in more collaboration as a pathway towards impartial learning outcomes for ELL students. It is imperative for school-based and district-based stakeholders to share a common mission and vision for the teaching and planning of ELL students.

All participants agreed that there was a need for collaboration between ESL teachers and core content subject area teachers to discuss, reflect, share and combine

teaching methods. According to participants SP01, SP03, SP04, and SP07, collaboration was needed; however, they did not work in partnership with the ESL teachers or specialists. All the participants believed that time constraints, scheduling, and how teachers prioritize student needs were major factors when it came to providing an appropriate education for their ELLs. Participant SP04 stated:

> I do not get an opportunity to collaborate with the ESL teacher for support because of different schedule conflicts. The priority that is placed on the focus of exceptional children population when it comes to teacher collaboration. I wish that there was opportunity for co-teaching with the ESL teachers.

The responses revealed that teachers believed collaboration was especially advantageous in science, math, and social studies, where students were exposed to core content-specific vocabulary that could be more challenging. Peercy (2018) supported that ELLs would achieve more success if core content subject area teachers and ESL teachers made efforts to collaborate. A collaborative partnership would potentially provide a space to challenge instructional strategies as well as offer and provide constructive feedback.

As reported by participants SP02, SP06, SP10, SP011, and SP012, teacher collaboration strategies with ESL teachers occurred mainly when ELLs showed major challenges in the core content classroom. Participant SP02 described how support was given from the ESL teacher:

> The ESL teacher will sometime pull out the students or they may join the content area class for 30 to 40 minutes. She helps students with their current assignment,

however we do not collaborate prior to her visit to my classroom, so there is not focus on vocabulary.

Participant SP08 added that the ESL teacher was used for small group instruction focusing on current skills; however, there was seldom any collaboration to discuss the current content or focus on vocabulary-building strategies. Participants SP05 and SP09 agreed in their responses that consistent collaboration with ESL teachers led to noticeable student achievement. The collaborative sessions discussed cultural competence and scheduled times for ESL teachers to conduct class observations. Collaborative sessions were also used to provide insight on student levels, understand students' abilities to acquire a new language, and address the student's vocabulary needs. Vintan and Gallagher (2019) also highlighted the importance of academic success and cultural competency in the classroom. The authors noted that collaboration allowed teachers to learn new and contemporary teaching practices. Moreover, core content subject area teachers could widen their knowledge of culturally competent instruction, likely positively influencing their students' abilities to learn content area vocabulary.

Theme 2

Another theme that developed from the results was the lack of specific training for ELLs. All teachers stated that the lack of specific training for ELLs was a barrier to teaching ELLs effectively in the core content classrooms of math, science, and social studies. According to all| participants, professional development and training played a vital part in their abilities to teach ELLs. Participants who believed that they could successfully teach ELLs constantly participated in professional development to enhance

their abilities to provide effective content vocabulary instruction for their ELLs. Eight out of twelve participants stated they did not feel confident in supporting ELLs in the core content subject area classroom largely due to a lack of appropriate professional development opportunities. The teacher participants stated they wanted additional guidance to support the ELLs' academic vocabulary needs in the core content subject areas.

Teachers attested that they had not participated in any specific ELL professional development that provided appropriate instructional strategies to meet the academic vocabulary needs of ELLs; therefore, professional development was necessary to increase their knowledge, skills, and abilities to implement direct instruction strategies for ELLs. Participants felt that the most beneficial professional development would focus solely on ELLs and vocabulary building. Professional development sessions that focused broadly on the support of all students, with only a marginal mention of ELL instructional support, were considered least beneficial. It is necessary to have professional development that specifically focuses on meeting the academic needs of ELL students so that teachers can learn effective vocabulary strategies in core content subject areas. Participants SP09, SP11, SP01, and SP05 all stated that they had not attended any professional development workshops or trainings that focused on best teaching practices to support ELL vocabulary development. Participant SP11 stated:

> My ELLs oftentimes need more than I can provide them with. I believe that the district needs to provide teachers with effective professional development and would offer teachers more teaching strategies to help ELLs.

Many teachers agreed that they used the same strategies for all students; however, they believed if they had more specific strategies for ELLs, they would be able to help their ELL students acquire the vocabulary necessary to be successful in the core content subject areas.

Based on the district demographics report, many ELL students were categorized as high risk for academic failure based on their low socioeconomic status and the lack of educational resources at home. Without appropriate access to instructional resources and technology, ~~t~~eachers may find it difficult to implement methods and strategies to help ELL students. Some teachers believed that using basic strategies would have more impact on ELL's achievement than if they did not use any strategies at all. Participant SP04 stated:

> I have been teaching 7 years, and I have not received any trainings to ELLs. The challenges I face are using generic strategies for all students, and not have tools and resources to implement true vocabulary strategies for ELLs in social studies.

Some teachers revealed that they had to develop their own resources, hoping they would be effective, which was very time-consuming. I found that many resources were not suitable for ELLs. Lack of suitability was determined by whether academic resources and strategies were on the appropriate level for ELL students or if the instruments on how to implement were too vague. It is important to note that teachers who self-assessed themselves as developing in their abilities to instruct ELLs on the core content classroom agreed that the lack of specific training in vocabulary building might affect their teacher abilities of ELLs; however, not all students collectively. Guler (2020) highlighted support

for teachers to gain knowledge in ELL education. He supported that core content subject area teachers may have negative cultural perceptions of ELLs and, therefore, may be using inaccurate teaching strategies to teach ELLs. Researchers showed that content-area teachers were generally unfamiliar with ELL strategies because they had not received extensive professional development on meeting the needs of ELLs, particularly within the context of their subject areas (Besterman et al., 2018).

Theme 3

Another theme that emerged from the results was teachers' beliefs in the abilities of all ELL students to show growth or demonstrate proficiency regardless of factors such as language barriers. All the teacher participants believed all students have the capacity to learn. It was agreed that students do not learn at the same rate or with the same methods or strategies, but it is certainly possible for students to learn and grow. Education is not exclusively academic; the teacher must also teach their students mentally by teaching them the skills to develop a growth mindset. Teachers believed that circumstances such as parent support, teacher strategies, and student attitude play a vital role in the ELLs' success; however, student growth is possible. The consensus was that teachers needed to use a variety of methods/approaches in order to reach all students. They understood that not all students learn in the same way. Understanding ways to vary methods of teaching ELLs will help to foster not only learning but growth in all ELLs. The perspectives were consistent that teachers play a significant role in learning, particularly in facilitating ELL students' feelings, connection to school, and self-efficacy as learners. Participant SP12 stated:

> I believe that all students will learn and grow if the instruction is not at -or above- frustration level and the students are motivated to do the work.

Teachers agreed that ELL students could progress in all subjects and could learn based on their individual development and abilities. Participant SPO9 agreed,

> I am confident ELLs are capable of learning and growing and reaching their full potential. The way they learn will look different, but consistency and student self-belief play a factor in student success.

Research from Shim and Shur (2018) supported the sentiments of this theme. The authors agreed that ELLs' learning experiences have largely focused on teacher and student views. Further findings indicated there is a necessity to understand ELLs' perspectives of their own learning experiences and to make efforts to foster their growth based on their beliefs. In this regard, the researchers were firm in their beliefs that there is not enough emphasis on the student's abilities to acquire adequate necessary language and vocabulary skills, nor are there sufficient learning opportunities for teachers who support ELLs.

Discrepant Cases

I took into consideration all discrepant cases. Some of the participant's responses to the interview questions did not clearly answer the research questions for the study. The discrepant cases were utilized in the final project study. I explored the responses for discrepant cases as I coded my data from the interview transcripts. Although participants had comparable experiences, challenges, and perspectives, there were only two responses that could be interpreted as a discrepant case. Participants SP1 and SP11, when asked in

the last five years, how many PD workshops or trainings have you attended that focused on best teaching practices to support EL vocabulary development? How were they structured; both answered that they had not participated in any workshops or trainings. These participants were noted as a discrepant case because their responses shared differed significantly from the other participants. Those discrepancies did not alter the findings but established support for the need for training for middle school content teachers to implement specific instructional model strategies to support explicit academic vocabulary building for ELL students. These discrepant cases could help district and school administrators as well as teachers of ELLs when making decisions on trainings that will benefit ELLs in all classrooms, which may not focus on vocabulary building.

Evidence of Quality

Member checking ensured establishing the integrity of the research study's findings. This member-checking process guaranteed that the findings were accurate and honest, as the interviewees approved my interpretation of their open-ended responses, which offered them an awareness of the findings of this study (Candela, 2019).

To safeguard the quality and validity of the collected data, my findings were presented to the participants for member checking. The participants did not identify any errors or see any need for modifying the presentation of the findings as written. The participants were pleased with the transcribed data and decided that the transcripts were correct.

Conclusion

This qualitative study's aim was to investigate how classroom core subject teachers at Middle School 55 perceive their ability to implement specific instructional

model strategies to support explicit academic vocabulary building for ELL students. Through teacher interviews, I deeply understood core subject teachers' perceptions of supporting ELLs' vocabulary building in the core classroom. A basic qualitative study design provided me with an opportunity to interview to gather data to answer the research questions. The school location where the doctoral study took place was Middle School 55, with many ELL students. There were twelve participants in this doctoral project study who were middle-school core content subject area teachers in one of the following areas: math, science, or social studies, presently teaching or have taught ELL students.

Additionally, the participants emphasized that they felt under-prepared to provide appropriate research-based instruction for their ELL students. To protect participants' identities, I utilized a letter-number system for each participant, with the assigned letter combination of SP. I met my responsibility to further safeguard the teacher participants by electronically storing all study-related materials, including interview recordings and responses. The data will be a password-guarded file on my computer, ensuring no one else will have access to the data. Any paper or non-electric data will be kept in a secure box. Data will be protected for five years, per the procedure of Walden University. After five years, I will destroy all data and shred all journals or notes accompanying the research. The data from my interviews reveal some common threads.

While vocabulary learning is one of the essential skills needed for language learning (Wei, 2021), it remains difficult for teachers to help students who are learning the English language (Williams et al., 2019). For students to successfully understand the core content, teachers must understand and implement direct instruction for vocabulary

learning and be able to offer their ELL students effective strategies to learn the vocabulary (Moody et al., 2018). Targeted vocabulary instruction involves using systematic methods that intentionally focus on students' critical needs for the content area (Valley, 2019). The exploration of teachers' perceptions suggested a need for professional development to learn strategies and instruction that are useful and effective for vocabulary development. It will require a connection to be made between academic and content-specific vocabulary word meaning if such teaching is to have any impact on the language success of ELL students.

This study will provide information that helps fill the gaps in the field of education by identifying evidence-based vocabulary strategies and instructional facilitation not only in the local school but across districts. The research will encourage implementing vocabulary-building strategies geared toward direct instruction for ELLs. This research will also provide teachers in the local district with innovative methods for teaching student vocabulary strategies that will ultimately result in the continuous application of effective teaching methods that will benefit ELLs. The outcomes to be considered are the enhancement of students' abilities in academic vocabulary, the consistent implementation of direct instruction as an instructional strategy and enhancing students' vocabulary independence.

Implications for positive social change take some journey as educators discover ways to implement instructional strategies for building vocabulary for ELLs. These outcomes may affect administration, principals, teachers, parents, and students as instructional strategies are implemented for continuous student improvement, increasing

vocabulary skills, and optimistically offering a society of learners equipped for their educational success. Based on the findings of this research, the goal is to establish professional development that focuses on effective vocabulary strategies for middle school students and to help link the educational missions of parents, community, and school to provide core content vocabulary strategies that will enhance student skills and offer an avenue of growth across core content disciplines.

After evaluating the data, the results of this doctoral project study were the basis for my decision to build a professional development workshop for all teachers who provide instructional support to ELLs. Based on the data evaluation, some of the teachers feel unprepared in their abilities to instruct vocabulary to ELLs in the core content areas because they lack the knowledge and skills of effective instructional strategies to support their ELL students in vocabulary building. Furthermore, some teachers had not received any professional development focused on teaching ELLs. By understanding the essential knowledge and developing the skills to teach ELLs, teachers could increase student achievement in vocabulary among ELL students in the core content areas. In section 3, I will explain the intent and advantages of the project.

Section 3: The Project

This project will be a 3-day professional development training program that involves how vocabulary and reading development occurs in the brain and assists middle school content area educators in helping ELLs to increase their vocabulary. The first session discusses the components required to successfully develop reading skills. Attendees will be educated on the effectiveness of differentiation when supporting their ELL students. Reading skills will be organized into two functions: language comprehension and word recognition. Each function will be discussed in terms of where each reading skill develops, the importance of each reading skill, and how language learning may impact the development of appropriate skills. Participants in the second session will explore research-based vocabulary instruction for ELLs with the goal of introducing research-based instructional strategies that will support the development of vocabulary skills in core content areas. The objective is for session participants to write a lesson plan that includes differentiation for ELLs throughout the session. During the third session, research-based vocabulary instruction for ELLs will be modeled through case studies, role play, and coaching. This session aims to introduce research-based instructional strategies that will support the development of vocabulary skills in core content areas for ELLs. The objective is for attendees to be able to identify and use research-based strategies to support vocabulary instruction of ELLs.

Theoretical Foundation

Engelmann's direct instruction framework for effective and efficient teaching was used as the foundation for my research study, and Krashen's theory of second language

acquisition was used as support for the project plan. Monitoring in second language acquisition refers to more formal and explicit approaches to language teaching. Krashen's definition of acquisition relates to ways for ELLs to develop language skills. Academic vocabulary teaching and learning were explored in my dissertation as deliberate and structured processes in which specific strategies were suggested to support ELLs in middle school. Academic vocabularies are non-general concepts that are typically consistent over time, following definitive rules regarding spelling and meaning. They may be defined specifically for use within a specific content area to explain content-specific ideas and concepts. Because content area teachers at Middle School 55 are generally not well-prepared to teach ELLs in their classrooms. Using a more structured and formalized approach to teaching vocabulary will hopefully mitigate the fact that content area teachers at Middle School 55 lack significant experience with ELL education.

Project Rationale

The rationale for this project was developed as I conducted my research. Teacher professional development was the most identified area of need in ELL education (Ritchie, 2020). Based on my research, I concluded that effective vocabulary teaching strategies implemented by core content subject area teachers would be advantageous for ELLs as they are learning academic vocabulary. Explicit teaching of vocabulary is essential to students who are learning a second language. ELLs experience fewer academic successes than their English-speaking peers (Roesler, 2022). The population of ELLs served in public schools across the United States is estimated to be over four million students

(NCTE, 2020). The range of needs among ELL students is so diverse that it is difficult for districts to create and implement educational programs that accommodate the individualized needs of each student. Students who lack proficiency in English are more likely to be viewed negatively in classroom environments, isolated from their English-speaking peers, and receive little support from their teachers (Giatsou, 2019).

This professional development project could potentially be used as a model for other districts and schools as they plan their own trainings that focus on effective teaching practices for ELL students. Using my professional development model, administrators and content core subject area teachers can formulate plans of action to help teachers meet their ELL students' needs. As they explore this project, districts and schools should take the opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses of their own curriculum and design for ELL education and create an improvement plan to capitalize on strengths while identifying ways to eliminate any weaknesses. Topics and activities in my professional development model can be redesigned to reflect a district, school, or classroom's unique ELL population and district and school resources.

Review of the Literature

A review of literature and responses to interview questions highlighted a need for core content subject area teachers to be made aware of how language acquisition occurs for ELLs as well as more training for teachers regarding how to provide vocabulary instruction for middle school ELL students. The challenge was trying to scaffold core content area vocabulary for students with limited or no English language exposure. While

ELLs in middle grades may develop social language quickly, this does not necessarily mean that they easily develop academic vocabulary skills (University of Florida, 2018).

Although social language communication is important for ELLs' peer-to-peer communication, lack of formality disqualifies social language communication from being a predictor of whether ELLs will master middle school core content subject area academic vocabulary (Sandoval, 2018). Explicit instruction of vocabulary should be multifaceted, and a one size fits all approach will not meet the needs of all ELLs. Learning opportunities should include direct instruction as well as incidental learning (University of Florida, 2018).

Successful development of academic vocabulary is essential to students being able to comprehend core content area texts. ELLs may find it difficult to learn academic vocabulary because of significant language barriers that they experience (Krashen, 1991). Language barriers can include difficulty with expressive and recessive language, difficulty reading transit words, difficulty understanding nuances of grammar and composition in a second language, and limited exposure to conventions of the second language outside of academic learning environments (Krashen, 1982). Specifically, if ELLs struggle to acquire second language skills and are not exposed to the second language outside of school settings, they may experience delays in terms of acquisition of core content area vocabulary (Sandoval, 2018). However, with explicit vocabulary instruction, ELLs have a greater chance of experiencing academic success (Texas Center for Learning Disabilities, 2020)

Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

All literacy learning begins with phonological and phonemic awareness. Without adequate development of these skills, children struggle to develop reading and writing skills. The achievement gap for ELLs is widening, particularly those in middle and high schools. The problem has been linked to ELLs' lack of early literacy skills essential to developing other literacy skills like reading comprehension and vocabulary. For ELLs to progress towards reading proficiency, teachers require an understanding of how ELLs' native languages differ from the English language, thus impacting ways second language literacy skills (Lems et al., 2017). As such, when creating learning opportunities for ELLs, consideration should be given to previous literacy experiences as well as levels of English language proficiency (Alberta Education, 2022). Adolescent ELLs who have not received instruction involving early literacy in the English language, notably how to match letters to sounds, will likely struggle with reading comprehension (Lems et al., 2017).

Although early literacy skills are generally taught in elementary school, ELLs in middle school may benefit from early literacy instruction to facilitate their learning of academic vocabulary. Teachers are encouraged to include basic literacy instruction with vocabulary instruction so that ELL students can develop and use their language skills in their core content subject area classes (Kaplan, 2019). Integrating phonics instruction with vocabulary instruction would allow ELLs to develop both word fluency as well as an understanding of a word's meaning (Staveley, 2021).

Phonics instruction has been cited as an important component in the literacy and learning of all students, but perhaps even more so for ELLs. The ability to decode will help students identify letters and letter sounds in isolation(segmenting), then blend the letters together to form a word. This skill would provide ELLs with evidence-based strategies to identify unfamiliar words they encounter when reading. Decoding activities should include presenting the ELL student with a decodable word. To be decodable, a word must follow regular spelling and sound conventions. For example, the word "you" would not be considered a decodable word because the "o" and the "u" would not be pronounced in isolation because they are consonant blends. However, a word like "cat" is decodable because each letter has its own unique sound. Once each sound has been articulated, the student would blend all sounds together to form a word.

Word attack refers to the explicit nature in which strategies are taught to help students identify unfamiliar words. Word-attack strategies may be effective for ELLs (Brooke, 2017), as they would be able to recognize unfamiliar words by finding familiar letter chunks. Letter chunks would include prefixes, suffixes, root words, letter-sound combinations, and smaller words embedded with the unfamiliar word. Read each chunk by itself. Then blend the chunks and sound out the word.

Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

Explicit vocabulary instruction refers to using a comprehensive approach to teaching vocabulary specific to each core content area subject matter. The importance of explicit content subject area vocabulary instruction for all students is noted. However, the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction for ELLs becomes critical due to their

limited exposure to written and spoken English outside the school environment, coupled with the fact that it could take ELLs 10 years to reach proficiency in English compared to their non-ELL peers (Giatsou, 2019), though the length of residency nor prolonged exposure to the second language are reliable predictors of language acquisition (Krashen, 1982).

For instruction to be explicit, the instructional and content design should be rigorous and include research-based strategies that have been proven effective in the development of literacy skills for ELLs (Brooke, 2017). Teaching strategies such as modeling, reading aloud, thinking aloud, questioning, guided practice and students' independent practice are used to help ELLs identify unknown words as they are reading. For example, Total Physical Response (TPR), Language Experience Approach (LEA), and Incidental Vocabulary Instruction have been identified as effective strategies that may be useful during vocabulary instruction.

TPR

The TPR strategy encourages students to look at the word holistically, using physical reactions to help teach students new vocabulary. The teacher models the physical action while teaching the vocabulary. For example, when teaching students about protests, a social studies teacher may use fist-pumping motions to indicate word meaning. Once the word has been used systematically, the social studies teacher would have students' fist-pump whenever the word "protest" was mentioned (Ferlazzo, 2022). The next step would be for the social studies teacher to have the students say the word and fist pump as they are doing so. Finally, the teacher would write the word "protest" so

that students are able to see the word and associate it with the physical action (Bilingua, 2022).

LEA

ELL instruction must be rigorous, relevant, differentiated, and individualized for ELLs, with the understanding that students who are learning on different levels are developing their literacy skills, particularly in reading, writing, and speaking (Brooke, 2017). As a research-based method, the Language Experience Approach (LEA) allows teachers to scaffold literacy and language instruction through a series of reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities that can be differentiated and individualized based on students' learning levels. Because students will use their own experiences and ideas in their writing, it allows teachers to focus their instruction on vocabulary and writing (State of Victoria, 2022).

The LEA lesson can be created as a whole group, small group, or intervention activity. A lesson could be structured so that students are writing about firsthand experiences, or students may collectively be involved in an activity, such as a scavenger hunt or game-based application, after which the teacher guides students in the process of writing about it. Sentences could be simple, no more than three to five words in length or sentences could be more complex and expanded in length to include adjectives, adverbs, and other higher-order grammar skills (State of Victoria, 2022). Sentence structure would depend on students' literacy and language abilities.

Incidental Vocabulary Instruction

Incidental vocabulary instruction occurs within the natural learning environment of a student. This type of instruction happens spontaneously and is usually framed around a topic already being discussed in the classroom or could occur as teachable moments that have no relationship with the topic of discussion in the classroom. Using incidental vocabulary instruction allows ELLs the opportunity not only to understand word meaning but to use that word both in and out of context. A study conducted by Aka (2020) and Singer (2022) explored ways in which incidental learning could be used to support ELLs during their language acquisition journeys. Aka (2020) explored the idea that Japanese high school students could learn a specific grammatical convention through repetitive exposure to the same grammar structure in their reading. Based on the study's findings, Aka (2020) established a positive link between incidental learning and an ELL's ability to successfully develop their linguistic abilities by having multiple encounters with targeted vocabulary. Singer (2022) researched the use of cartoons as an effective means of learning unfamiliar words, theorizing that incidental exposure to cartoon dialogue could prove instrumental to ELL children's success in learning a second language.

Teacher Preparedness

Preparing teachers to deliver effective research-based instruction to second language learners is critical to the success of such instruction (Guler, 2020). Lack of appropriate professional development was a repetitive theme in the research literature (Cannady, 2020; Zhang et al., 2021); either districts were not offering any professional development as it relates to ELLs, or the professional development offered by the district

did not address many of the issues that teachers felt had impacted the teaching and learning of ELLs (Mitchell, 2019). Throughout my dissertation, I explored teacher preparedness to address the academic needs of their ELLs. Most participants in my study felt underprepared, lacking the foreknowledge to create learning opportunities for ELLs.

Professional Development

School districts must provide their teachers with multiple opportunities to effectively oversee the teaching and learning of ELL students (NCTE, 2020). The rate at which the ELL population is increasing in public schools should be alarming since many teachers are either minimally addressing the needs of ELLs or not addressing their needs at all (Cannady, 2020). There have been suggestions that teachers have negative attitudes about ELL students due to the frustration of not knowing how to integrate ELLs into the academic environment (Guler, 2020).

Teacher Preparation Programs

The potential for developing positive teaching and learning experiences for ELL education could begin as early as a teacher candidate's enrollment in a university preparation program. Because the structure of teacher preparation programs may vary amongst universities across the country, it is not uncommon for some teacher candidates, more than others, to have more knowledge about how to support ELL students (Ritchie, 2020). The idea of preparing teachers for ELL education at the university has been explored in recent studies, with results supporting the effectiveness of this approach (Giatsou, 2019). However, it should be understood that teacher preparation programs are only a foundation for preparing candidates to work with ELLs; as such, it is impossible to

prepare teacher candidates for every situation that may occur in ELL education (Fober, 2020).

Teacher Background

Although ELL student populations have grown exponentially over the past decade, the teaching force has not changed to reflect student diversity. As such, approximately 90% of teachers in the United States are white females (Tardy et al., 2022), whose experiences with teaching ELL students range from no experiences to significant experiences. Where a teacher falls within this range will determine their understanding of ELL educational needs, their belief in their abilities to teach ELLs, and the importance of identifying and using best practices for the teaching and learning of ELLs (Ritchie, 2020). Teachers' attitudes and beliefs about ELLs' education could be shaped by their personal and professional backgrounds.

Race and culture in public schools across the United States have been researched from various perspectives, with researchers extensively highlighting the intentional and unintentional impact of a teacher's race on student learning (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Gunn et al., 2021; Puzio et al., 2020). Teachers with limited exposure to other races and cultures outside of their own may have a negative attitude and hold low expectations for students who do not embody their ideas of an ideal student (Shim, 2019). As a result, teachers with Eurocentric values and beliefs may not understand how race, culture, socioeconomics, and linguistic differences may limit a student's ability to access the learning environment without low to moderate accommodations and modifications put in place by the teacher (Rizzuto, 2017). The contrast between student and teacher

demographics is important to understand when planning educational opportunities for racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students.

Project Reflection

Reflection on the project study will be done at least twice a week through analysis of study data, a review of recurring themes, and any participant feedback from post-workshop surveys. I will take the time to reflect on ways to enhance the professional development I have proposed, using the research I will gather from similar professional development training that focuses specifically on instructional strategies that have been proven effective for ELLs.

Project Outline

Day 1: Language Acquisition

The rationale for selecting the topics in this session is based on the idea that teachers need to understand how ELLs acquire language so that lesson plans can be created and implemented with research-based practices for ELLs (Fober, 2020).

Goal: Attendees will create action plans for ELLs based on best practices for language acquisition.

Objectives: To identify gaps in the teaching and learning experiences in ELL education and design an action plan to address the gaps that have been identified.

Attendees will learn about:

1. Brain-based processes involved in language acquisition.
2. Factors that influence the acquisition of language. Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition.

3. How language and learning are impacted by the development of the different areas of the reading brain.
4. Understanding the various strands of reading development that are important as ELLs develop English-language literacy skills. Strands are background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, literacy knowledge, phonological awareness, decoding, and sight word recognition.
5. Common instructional mistakes that impact an ELL's literacy development.
    - Handout of "The Reading Brain," which is essentially a drawing of the brain, the various cortexes, and their functions.
    - Handout of the Reading Rope is an infographic of a rope that shows the strands that make up skilled reading and how those strands are interwoven.
    - Prezi presentation of reading development includes: (a)individual slides for each cortex of The Reading Brain. Individual slides for each cortex will be used to explore its function in developing appropriate reading skills. (b) individual slides for the processes (language comprehension and word recognition) involved in the Reading Rope, and its function in developing appropriate reading skills. (c) Factors that may affect the development of reading skills. These factors include:
        - ➢ Development of reading skills in the native language.
        - ➢ Presence of a disability.
        - ➢ Environmental influences such as the predominant language spoken in the home.

- ➢ Challenges with developing a new language while simultaneously learning academic vocabulary.

Day 2: Identifying Research-Based Vocabulary Instruction for ELLs

The rationale for the selection of the topics and activities in this section is based on the recommendation that teachers should be involved with more professional development workshops that will give them hands-on experiences with creating lesson plans that align with the needs of ELL students based on evidence-based practices (Roesler, 2022).

Goal: To introduce research-based instructional strategies that will support the development of vocabulary skills in the core content areas.

Objectives: Attendees will write a lesson plan to include differentiation for ELLs.

- Handouts to include two example lesson plan templates and one blank lesson plan template. The first lesson plan template will be a basic lesson that includes all of the basic components of the curriculum and instruction from one of the core content subject areas. The example will be used to show the foundation for a lesson that does not include opportunities for differentiation, diversified learning, or individualization.
- The second version of the lesson plan will be more extensive, including research-based differentiated resources and strategies that support the teaching and learning of vocabulary for ELLs. In groups of 3-4 people, attendees will analyze the components and new additions that have been added to the lesson plan from Day 1. They will discuss the importance of the new additions as well as ways in which

they intend to approach literacy instruction for students who are not English language speakers at home. Each group will share at least one idea from their discussion.

- The third version of the lesson plan will be a blank template that attendees will use to create their own core content subject area lesson plan that includes all of the necessary components to support ELLs in the classroom. The second lesson plan template can be used as a model for attendees as they are completing this activity.
- A fourth handout will be a graphic chart outlining ELLs' five levels of language proficiency.

Day 3: Modeling of Research-Based Vocabulary Instruction for ELLs

The rationale for the selection of the topics and activities in this section is based on two findings. One, that ELL students benefit from explicit academic vocabulary instruction, and two, core content subject area teachers have not been properly prepared to teach ELLs. The goals and objectives identified for Day 3 will address both findings.

Goal: To introduce research-based instructional strategies that will support the development of vocabulary skills in the core content areas for ELLs.

Objectives: Attendees will identify and use research-based strategies to support the vocabulary instruction of ELLs.

Attendees will learn about:

1. Additional factors to be considered when identifying appropriate vocabulary instruction for ELLs.

2. Appropriate strategies that have been identified as effective when providing ELLs vocabulary instruction.
3. Additional resources (e.g., technology, intervention programs) will help facilitate ELLs' vocabulary instruction.
4. What appropriate vocabulary instruction should look like for ELLs?
    - Participants will watch a 5-minute video about strategies that teachers in other areas of the country have found effective for supporting ELLs.
    - Participants will view a 5-minute video featuring two case study students, one who received explicit vocabulary instruction, and one who did not, and how their academic experiences impacted their outcomes.
    - During instructional modeling and role-playing activities, participants will note any positive and negative behaviors the teacher and student exhibited after each activity. The observation worksheet will be distributed before the activities begin.
    - A reflection sheet will be distributed so that participants can document how their attendance in the workshop may help them revise their current practices for teaching ELL students.

Project Implications

Core content area teachers who teach ELLs will benefit from the 3-day PD sessions. These teachers will learn strategies to successfully teach ELLs to improve their vocabulary knowledge in the core content areas. Professional development with hands-on activities will help content core teachers to help ELLs learn academic vocabulary.

Core teachers will benefit from the findings by learning how to write effective lesson plans and focus on specific objectives to help build academic vocabulary for ELLs. The project was created to meet the needs of middle school core content area teachers who teach ELLs. The 3-day project should be utilized by school and district administrators for decision-making processes to support teachers who teach ELLs at all levels of language ability. The project may also encourage school and district administrators to provide more professional development opportunities for core subject teachers who teach ELLs to increase their vocabulary knowledge of ELLs. This professional development has implications for positive social change because the professional development is specific and relevant to increasing teachers' knowledge and skills where they can learn the necessary and appropriate instructional strategies to work with ELLs. The professional development is focused explicitly on strategies that support ELLs. It can directly meet the need of the teachers, stakeholders, and students as they gain vocabulary knowledge that will benefit them long-term in their academic future.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The objective of this qualitative study was to investigate how classroom core subject teachers at Middle School 55 perceive their ability to implement specific instructional model strategies to support explicit academic vocabulary building for ELL students. Low achievement on vocabulary assessments led to an investigation of the perspectives of middle school core subject teachers regarding instructional strategies to support the academic vocabulary needs of ELLs in the regular educational classroom. In this section, I discuss the strengths and limitations of the qualitative project study. I explain recommendations for professional development for teachers and administrators. I also discuss the significance of this project study, implications and suggestions for future researchers, and my conclusion.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

This professional development program was developed to help instructional coaches, school leaders, and core content teachers increase their knowledge and skills regarding strategies to improve the vocabulary development of ELLs. ELLs' achievement can increase by focusing on the professional needs of core content area teachers who teach ethnically diverse students. Through professional development, content area teachers can learn to plan effective and appropriate lesson plans and learning activities that target content vocabulary and implementation through the content area discipline. Data demonstrated that core content area education did not have strong background

knowledge of evidence-based instructional strategies for ELLs. Therefore, they require knowledge of effective instructional strategies and self-confidence in terms of working with linguistically diverse students. A strength of this project is that content area teachers can learn the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively teach content area vocabulary to ELLs by attending this professional development program. Teachers' experience, skills, and self-efficacy can positively influence how they assess students' vocabulary knowledge as well as plan and implement core content area instruction. Another strength of professional development sessions is that they improve the overall quality of teaching and learning at Middle School 55. By knowing ELLs' academic and linguistic needs, content area teachers can challenge each student academically. Implementing appropriate vocabulary learning activities and strategies for ELL students as it relates to their English proficiency will result in core academic growth. While many ELL students enter classrooms with solid vocabulary skills in their home language, this does not necessarily mean they successfully acquire vocabulary in the second language (Sa'd & Rajabi, 2018).

ELLs enter school with more limited English-language vocabularies than non-ELL students (Gallagher et al., 2019). ELLs in secondary grades struggle in content area classes if they do not have adequate language and literacy skills. Teachers may become more engaged in student learning and delivering instruction for students to practice problem-solving skills and critical thinking techniques. Teachers' content knowledge and changes in teacher practices affect student achievement. Popova et al. (2022) said content area teachers support the need for professional development of student-centered

mathematics pedagogies to increase student vocabulary achievement and students' understanding of algebraic concepts. Data from this research suggests that teachers with proper professional development can make pedagogical changes, consequently improving student learning outcomes. The strength of this project is that professional development can provide content area teachers with practical knowledge and skills to support the academic vocabulary needs of ELLs and increase teachers' capacity to implement quality teaching and learning.

Limitations

While the professional development project can be advantageous to instructional coaches, school leaders, core content teachers, and parents, this project has some limitations. One limitation of this project is that only twelve middle school teachers were interviewed during the data collection process. The limited number of participants was not representative of middle school content area teachers. This professional development is designed to be implemented for a particular group of teachers; therefore, the results of this doctoral project study may not be applicable on a larger scale as results may vary. Another limitation involves the deliverability of the professional development program. Even though it is outlined in detail, instructional coaches or school leaders may not be knowledgeable about ELL instruction. Because of this limitation, experts with a background in ELLs may need to be used to instruct training, which may be an issue if school funds are unavailable.

The 3-day timeframe for professional development could also be a limitation of this project study. The training was created to be executed at the beginning of the

academic year. Teachers may feel pressure and voice objections to adding a task at the start of the year along with their other responsibilities, which may weaken the buy-in and effectiveness of the training. Professional development is designed to be meaningful yet timely. Time may be limited for content area teachers and school leaders to engage in meaningful discussions and collaboration for vocabulary support of ELLs.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The problem explored through this study is that math, social studies, and science content area teachers struggle to implement specific instructional model strategies to support explicit content area academic vocabulary building for ELL students. To effectively execute this, an alternative approach could be that teachers need to agree to training and be willing to do work to learn instructional strategies that promote and foster ELL students' academic vocabulary in core content areas. Instructional coaches and school leaders need to explain to content area teachers the advantages of attending professional development and how knowledge will effectively benefit ELLs in content area classrooms. A second alternative approach is to offer it once monthly during professional learning teams. Professional learning teams are designed to build and extend capacity of teachings and how they meet the needs of students (Wallace, 2021). Teachers can work in collaborative teams focusing on vocabulary strategies in a specific core content area using curriculum units and research-based processes.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

Scholarship, to me, represents a learning approach that facilitates growth and positive change. As I conducted this qualitative study, I learned much about basic qualitative research. My objective was to answer the research questions and to discover themes that will help core content area teachers with ways to implement effective vocabulary strategies for ELLs. I also learned how to collect and analyze interview data effectively. During the project study, I learned a valuable understanding of how to conduct research. I increased my knowledge of what a good research experience can be in my role as an educator, instructional coach, and research practitioner. Throughout my data collection, I realized that participants need a platform to be heard and understood by giving feedback to enrich educational programs and school policies. While completing the study, I increased my communication skills as a teacher and instructional coach with my colleagues. Using my research skills to pinpoint details has informed decisions that impact the whole community as a collective body and not solely one individual. As a scholar, I now use my experiences of using research-based vocabulary instructional strategies to make educated decisions that will benefit my colleagues and my students simultaneously. My time spent in this doctoral program has given me an increased passion for learning and meeting the need of my diverse students.

Project Development

When I developed the professional development for my doctoral project study, it was my goal to create training that supported teachers and best offered them effective

strategies. The objective was for this professional development to be specific to core content area teachers and achievable outcomes for vocabulary-based strategies. The objective was for the professional development to also be relevant to the needs based on the interview responses from core content area teachers of math, science, and social studies, and lastly, to be time-bound to allow for effective outcomes and collaboration for better implementation. Defining these factors as they pertain to the professional development goal ensures that the objectives are attainable within a specific time frame, ultimately reducing generalities and guesswork but providing specific research-based strategies that can be implemented effectively (Fullan & Kirtman, 2019). I am currently working as a math and science instructional facilitator. This professional development has offered me a hands-on tool I plan to use to train core content area teachers who educate ELLs as a future leader.

The professional development is a learner-centered approach that focuses on the ELL student's learning and how they achieve vocabulary. This approach is attentive to meeting students' learning styles, not just educators or other stakeholders. With a learner-centered approach, the efforts are to grasp the students' interests and keep them engaged. When the student's interests are considered, it allows for further learning and intake of material. With success, students will improve the amount of vocabulary knowledge they acquire from their learning efforts. In this curriculum, students will clearly understand core content area vocabulary. Students are staying engaged and active in the learning process. They have transitioned from being passive learners to taking a proactive role in their education and appreciating the process (Payaprom & Payaprom, 2020). This

engagement raises the student's fulfillment of the educational atmosphere for the future and the world around them.

Leadership and Change

Gümüş et al. (2021) explain the variance between assigned and emergent leadership. Assigned leaders derive their authority from their company or organizational chain of command positions. The titles they are given carry weight and expectations with the employees they lead. With this type of leadership, the leader must demonstrate wisdom, critical thinking skills, and the ability to motivate employees to maintain a leadership position. However, emergent leaders arise from taking on tasks voluntarily, helping others complete their tasks better, and encouraging consensus among coworkers; this person is a developing leader.

My leadership philosophy is supported by Gümüş et al. (2021) in that this doctoral program taught me that my role as a leader would offer the grand challenge, create the environment for the challenge and invest in the individual to encourage successful leadership in others. I am responsible for inspiring groups of individuals with an achievable common goal.

In the educational setting, I am a leader committed to serving teachers, students, parents, and the community and sharing the school's and its district's vision. My philosophy on leadership is defined by the ability to work within an organization and seek their input on how to improve it. Influential leaders embody the traits that respect the needs of teachers and students to be influenced by the shared goals of the school based on the demographics therein. Gümüş et al. (2021) support my assertion by

explaining that leadership is a process that offers buy-in to groups of people to work towards a common goal or priority, all qualities I have gained in this doctoral process.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

This doctoral project study has prepared me to become an effective educator and future school leader because of the research-based strategies and data-driven skills I studied and learned through my doctoral journey. As an educator, I have often taken the path of least resistance and taken creativity out of the learning process. However, as time progressed, I began to create an environment that fosters creativity in learning and allows students to explore their talents. I now understand the influence research-based strategies can have on the learning process. Implementing these strategies can help students discover their potential and learning styles. During this journey, I discovered the importance of using data to enhance instruction and make educated decisions about effective vocabulary strategies for ELLs. As I completed the doctoral study, I learned how to utilize research to foster awareness of a local school problem and develop solutions based on that research.

I have learned to be a transformative leader who creates a vision to facilitate and follow through with the change. As a transformational leader, I will work to enrich administrators' and core content teachers' motivation, morale, and job performance. I have learned how to connect the identity of the stakeholders to admonish groups to raise their interest in common goals. I have learned how to influence members to take more ownership of their work while accepting the strengths and weaknesses of group members and using those traits to enhance their performance when meeting the needs of ELLs. In

the middle school setting, educators are consistently reflective and focused on student growth and ways to close achievement gaps through leadership and cultivate collaboration and best practices.

As the number of ELLs continues to grow across the country, it is essential to obtain effective instructional vocabulary strategies to stimulate ELL student achievement. School leaders can use professional development to increase teachers' skills in implementing effective vocabulary strategies, self-efficacy, organization, and cultural acceptance of varying backgrounds. The most challenging phase of this doctoral study was obtaining approval for the prospectus. I understand that the prospectus sets the foundation for the overall alignment of the entire study. I learned the importance of focusing on detail and aligning all sections. With the assistance of my committee members, I found clarity and cohesiveness in my writing in the data collection process. I was able to interview middle school core content area teachers who teach or have taught ELLs. I learned a great deal of understanding from the interviews and perspectives of teachers and their need for support of ELLs in the core content areas.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Implications for Social Change

This study provides findings regarding middle school core content teacher perspectives of vocabulary instructional practices of ELLs and how there is a need for more professional development. Therefore, the study's findings and professional development can promote positive social change and provide insights into how the local districts can meet the needs of ELLs who struggle with vocabulary in core content area

classrooms. The implications for positive social change consist of a clearer understanding of what vocabulary instructional practices middle school core content teachers use and still need to support ELL learning and what strategies are observed to be associated with improved ELL academic vocabulary performance. The rising ELL student population makes it vital for school districts to generate positive social change by employing effective instructional vocabulary strategies (Hellman, 2018). Many ELL students live in households where English is not their first language. Over the last seven years, linguistic isolation has increased in schools, where ELL populations are highly concentrated in schools, and high levels of linguistic isolation highlight the dual challenges of teaching ELL students, which calls for more focused academic vocabulary strategies (de Jong & Gao, 2019).

Applications

Through the results of my data collection, I created a professional development that will benefit core content area teachers in their knowledge and skills of academic vocabulary strategies. The number of ELL students continues to grow locally and nationally. When employed to core teachers, this professional development can promote social change by helping teachers feel more confident in their capacity to instruct ELL students in the core content areas. The professional development created for this project study can help close the gaps among ELLs and other subgroups. The application of this professional development will provide an increase in self-efficacy among teachers as well as students. Teachers must strive to learn as much as possible to become effective educators. Applying this professional development can influence how educators are

prepared with the knowledge and skills to help ELLs grow academically and socially. The journey of learning about adequate vocabulary instructional strategies to support the academic needs of diversity continues to be a catalyst for social change and improvement.

Directions for Future Research

In this study, I focused on middle school core content area teachers' perceptions of their ELL instructional practices. One recommendation for future research is the need for more in-depth perspectives from high school core content area teachers and non-core content area teachers. As I completed my data analysis, one of the themes appeared during the analysis of data that should be examined in more intensity. The study participants agreed that cultural awareness affects the methods used to teach ELLs at the middle school level. Another recommendation is that an intense study on the need for culturally responsive teaching can impact the middle school level. Florian and Beaton (2018) define cultural competence as having a conscious awareness of one's cultural individuality and perceptions about differences as well as the cultural diversity of others. For educators, it is the ability to learn, appreciate, celebrate, and build on all students' diverse cultures and community customs and practices. Understanding culture, gender, language abilities, and socioeconomic status can foster more effective educators by providing appropriate strategies that focus on vocabulary in the core content areas. Each of the recommendations stated above for further research will improve the expanding collection of research on teachers' vocabulary instructional practices of ELLs.

Conclusion

This study's aim was to investigate how classroom core subject teachers perceive their ability to implement specific instructional model strategies to support explicit academic vocabulary building for ELL students. As supported in research, there is a need for vocabulary instructional strategies that language arts and content area teachers must implement to build word consciousness of middle school ELL students (Brandes & McMaster, 2017).

A look at teacher preparation as it relates to ELLs has been the focus of this study. This research focuses on the needed changes in how ELL students are taught vocabulary in the content area and how they learn as it corresponds to teacher-implemented strategies. The increase in ELLs in the local district and the United States supports the need for a teacher capacity and effectiveness shift. The teacher responses in the doctoral project study suggest that there is a need for teachers to have substantial knowledge and effective vocabulary strategies to meet the demand of ELLs. This research shows that core content area teachers must be well versed in ELLs' academic language and cultural needs. The findings indicate an ongoing need for teacher education through detailed professional development that focuses on explicit strategies that increase ELLs' core content academic vocabulary. With the increase in varied demographics among students, it is crucial to have a toolbox of academic vocabulary strategies that will not only be beneficial to teachers but also foster the academic growth of ELLs. As a result, it is imperative that teachers, instructional coaches, and school leaders continue to work diligently to educate other teachers and administrators on the diverse population that

attend the local schools and truly provide strategies to assist the academic growth of the ELL population. It is essential to have an array of effective vocabulary strategies that will be simultaneously constructive for teachers and students. As leaders and educators continue to want the best for students, changes must be made to facilitate ways to teach ELLs and evolve how vocabulary strategies and responsiveness are implemented.

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Appendix A: The Project

A Three-Day Workshop to Provide Content Area Teachers with Research-Based Strategies to Support ELLs

To determine an appropriate time for this professional development series, several factors will be taken into consideration. First, there will be a review of the district and school calendars to determine the availability of dates throughout the upcoming school term. Several events will be added to the school's schedule for this coming school year, which means there may be limitations as to when the professional development series will take place. Upon meeting with my principal to discuss scheduling for the PD, I will propose three options:

1. Dedicate three consecutive days for teacher training during a remote learning week.
2. Allot one day each month for teachers to attend the training sessions.
3. Create and upload the PDs to Canvas, allowing teachers to complete each session as self-paced training.

Of the three options, number three is the least effective in terms of the goals, objectives, and delivery of the information that will be passed along during this professional development. I acknowledge that self-paced learning is often utilized by individuals who desire the flexibility of being able to learn when it is convenient (Kocdar et al., 2018). Many school districts, including the district in my study, have opted for self-paced learning formats to decrease teacher's time out of the classroom, allow teachers to create their own learning environment as opposed to having their learning environment

created for them, and to give educators resources that are easily accessible whenever they have the need to sharpen their skills and knowledge. However, self-paced learning is successful only when the learner is able to regulate their own learning and motivate themselves to complete assigned tasks without minimal supervision and support (Kocdar et al., 2018).

I will suggest to the principal that option number three not be given the same level of consideration as the other two options. I will explain to the principal that my suggestion is rooted in research that suggests self-paced learners are not experiencing a great deal of success because they lack the ability to organize and complete online learning assignments (Kocdar et al., 2018). This series of professional development workshops aims to give teachers hands-on training from facilitators who have knowledge and experience working with children who are English language learners. Although self-paced courses have been utilized quite frequently, especially during the recent school closures, a self-paced model does not seem appropriate. Supporting English language learners is currently a critical issue in education. Teachers need the benefit of learning new material and having someone who can help them navigate through their questions and concerns relevant to the topics being discussed. Using a self-paced model will not give them that direct contact peace, which may even limit the teacher's understanding of why certain strategies are being used. Teachers factor in the need for teachers who are learning something for the first time to have the intimacy of connecting with other colleagues as well as experts in the field. As such, my series of professional development workshop trainings have been created for face-to-face learning opportunities.

Once a decision is made regarding the workshop's schedules, I will reserve a meeting room at the local school district's professional development center. My next activity will be to submit a request to have the workshop advertised on the school district's main webpage. In addition, I will create a flier so that the workshop information can be emailed to teachers through their employee emails. Teachers will be able to register for the event through a link that will be included on the flier as well as included in the advertisement posted on the district's webpage.

Day 1: Language Acquisition

Goal: Attendees will create action plans for ELLs based on best practices for language acquisition.

Objectives: To identify gaps in the teaching and learning experiences in ELL education and design an action plan to address the gaps that have been identified.

Session 1: The Science of Reading

8:00-8:15

Brief introduction of the facilitator to include background and relevant experiences.

8:15-9:00

Brain-based processes involved in language acquisition.

9:00-10:00

Factors that influence the acquisition of language. Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition.

10:25-11:25

How the science of reading connects to ELLs .

***Handouts:**

The Reading Brain

The Reading Rope

Prezi presentation of reading development.

11:30-12:15

Prezi presentation of reading development.

***Handouts:**

Prezi presentation

1:45-2:45 pm

Common instructional mistakes that impact an ELLs literacy development.

2:45-3:30

Wrap up & reflection

3:30-3:35 pm

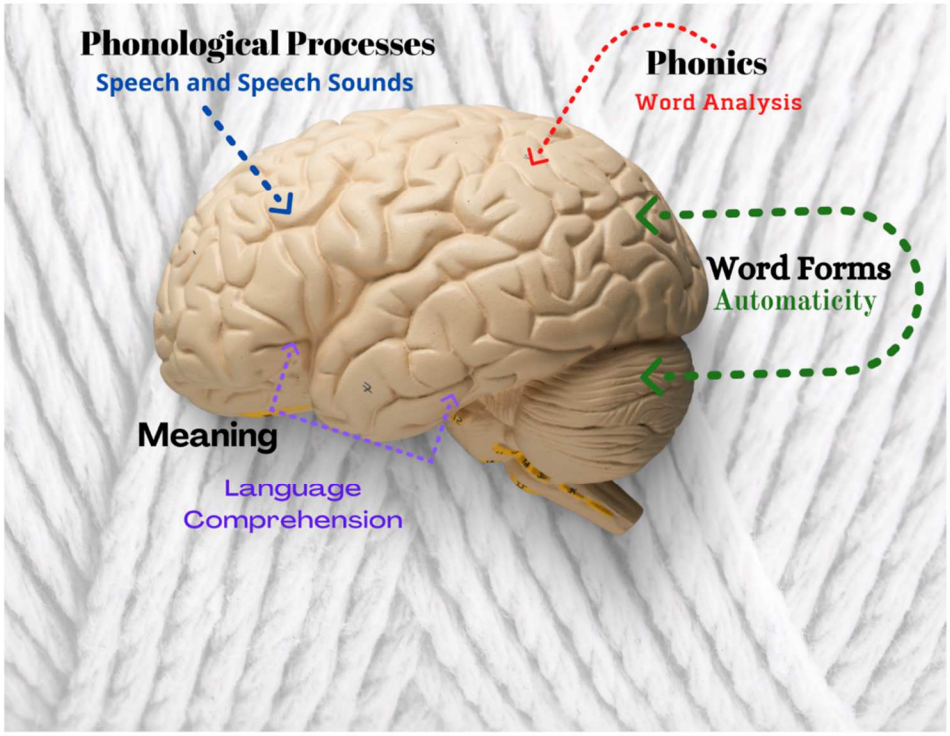
Session Survey

Break Times

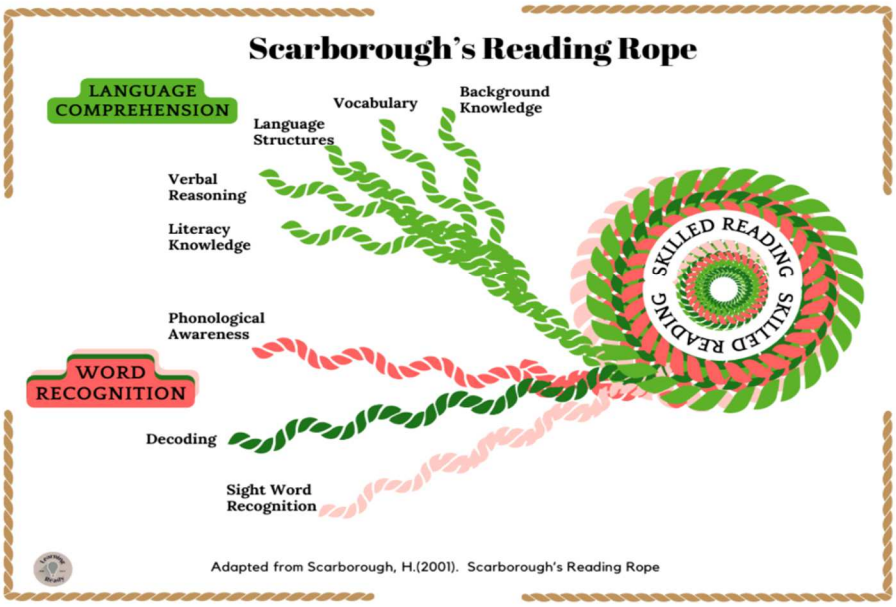
10:00-10:25 am

12:15-1:30 pm
(lunch)

Brain-Based Functions for Reading



Adapted from The Reading Brain



Beginning Literacy

A child's journey towards literacy often begins in their early-formative years. Many children will be exposed to some aspects of reading before they enter kindergarten. This includes:

- using symbols or signs to express ideas.
- babbling or using short utterances.
- attempting to read a story in their own "language."

Sample Prezi Slide

EARLY INTERMEDIATE LITERACY

A significant part of literacy is embedded in oral language. It is important to understand the processes students may use to develop oral language skills. Having knowledge of processes related to oral language development will help teachers support their students, particularly students with linguistic diversities or difficulties (Bears, 2022).

Sample Prezi Slide

Activities for Day 1 will include:

1. Whole group discussion of factors that influence the acquisition of language. Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition.
2. Discussion of how language and learning is impacted by development in different areas of the reading brain.
3. Learning about the various strands of reading development that are important as ELLs develop English-language literacy skills. Strands are background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, literacy knowledge, phonological awareness, decoding, and sight word recognition.

4. Identify common instructional mistakes that impact an ELLs literacy development.

- The handout of "The Reading Brain" is essentially a drawing of the brain, the various cortexes, and their functions.
- Handout of the Reading Rope is an infographic of a rope that shows the strands that make up skilled reading and how those strands are interwoven.
- Prezi presentation of reading development includes: (a)individual slides for each cortex of The Reading Brain.
- Attendees will be asked to complete a session survey at the end of the workshop. (Created in *Canva.com)*

Session Survey

Date: ____ / _____ / _____

Session name:

_____

Please circle a number at the end of each question.

Question	Not				Extremely
How satisfied are you with the information provided?	1	2	3	4	5
How would you rate the quality of the handouts?	1	2	3	4	5
How well did the facilitator present the information?	1	2	3	4	5
How beneficial was this workshop in terms of increasing your knowledge?	1	2	3	4	5
How likely are you to use the information/strategies/resources in your lesson plans?	1	2	3	4	5

Professional Development History

- ◯ This is my first ELL workshop.
- ◯ This is my 2-3 ELL workshop.
- ◯ This is my 4-5 ELL workshop.
- ◯ I have attended 6 or more ELL workshops.

Questions/Comments/Suggestions:

_____

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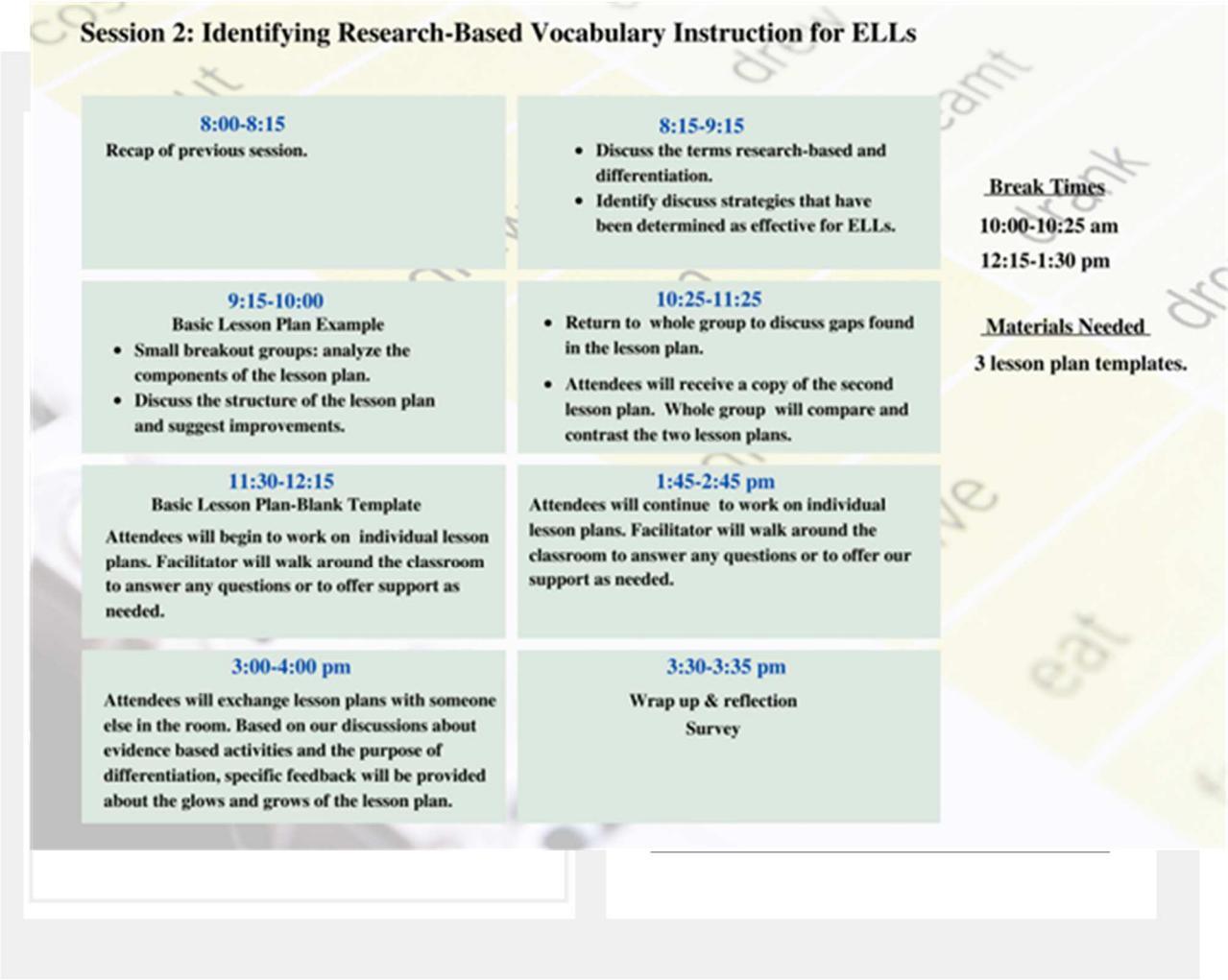
Day 2: Identifying Research-Based Vocabulary Instruction for ELLs

Goal: To introduce research-based instructional strategies that will support the development of vocabulary skills in the core content areas.

Objectives: Attendees will write a lesson plan to include differentiation for ELLs.



Session 2: Identifying Research-Based Vocabulary Instruction for ELLs

8:00-8:15
Recap of previous session.

8:15-9:15
- Discuss the terms research-based and differentiation.
- Identify discuss strategies that have been determined as effective for ELLs.

Break Times
10:00-10:25 am
12:15-1:30 pm

9:15-10:00
Basic Lesson Plan Example
- Small breakout groups: analyze the components of the lesson plan.
- Discuss the structure of the lesson plan and suggest improvements.

10:25-11:25
- Return to whole group to discuss gaps found in the lesson plan.
- Attendees will receive a copy of the second lesson plan. Whole group will compare and contrast the two lesson plans.

Materials Needed
3 lesson plan templates.

11:30-12:15
Basic Lesson Plan-Blank Template
Attendees will begin to work on individual lesson plans. Facilitator will walk around the classroom to answer any questions or to offer support as needed.

1:45-2:45 pm
Attendees will continue to work on individual lesson plans. Facilitator will walk around the classroom to answer any questions or to offer our support as needed.

3:00-4:00 pm
Attendees will exchange lesson plans with someone else in the room. Based on our discussions about evidence based activities and the purpose of differentiation, specific feedback will be provided about the glows and grows of the lesson plan.

3:30-3:35 pm
Wrap up & reflection
Survey

- Handouts to include 2 example lesson plan templates and one blank lesson plan template. The first lesson plan template will be a basic lesson that includes all of the basic components of the curriculum and instruction from one of the core content subject areas. The example will be used to show the foundation for a

lesson that does not include opportunities for differentiation, diversified learning, or individualization.

- The second version of the lesson plan will be more extensive, including research-based differentiated resources and strategies that support the teaching and learning of vocabulary for ELLs. In groups of 3-4 people, attendees will analyze the components and new additions that have been added to the lesson plan from Day 1. They will discuss the importance of the new additions as well as ways in which they intend to approach literacy instruction for students who are not English language speakers at home. Each group will share at least one idea from their discussion.
- The third version of the lesson plan will be a blank template that attendees will use to create their own core content subject area lesson plan that includes all of the necessary components to support ELLs in the classroom. The second lesson plan template can be used as a model for attendees as they are completing this activity.
- A fourth handout will be a graphic chart outlining the five levels of language proficiency for ELLs (WIDA, 2020).
- Attendees will be asked to complete a session survey at the end of the workshop.

LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE

GRADE	SUBJECT	DATE

TOPIC	UNIT

LESSON GOALS

MATERIALS/EQUIPMENT NEEDED	LEARNING OBJECTIVES

ACTIVITY

ASSESSMENT

LESSON PLAN ADJUSTMENTS TEMPLATE

IEP ACCOMMODATIONS/MODIFICATIONS

ELL ACCOMMODATIONS/MODIFICATIONS

DIFFERENTIATION

WIDA CONSORTIUM Performance Definitions for the Levels of English Language Proficiency in Grades K-12

At the given level of English language proficiency, English language learners will process, understand, produce, or use:

6 Reaching	• specialized or technical language reflective of the content areas at grade level • a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse as required by the specified grade level • oral or written communication in English comparable to English-proficient peers
5 Bridging	• specialized or technical language of the content areas • a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse, including stories, essays, or reports • oral or written language approaching comparability to that of English-proficient peers when presented with grade-level material
4 Expanding	• specific and some technical language of the content areas • a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral discourse or multiple, related sentences, or paragraphs • oral or written language with minimal phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that do not impede the overall meaning of the communication when presented with oral or written connected discourse with sensory, graphic, or interactive support
3 Developing	• general and some specific language of the content areas • expanded sentences in oral interaction or written paragraphs • oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that may impede the communication, but retain much of its meaning, when presented with oral or written, narrative, or expository descriptions with sensory, graphic, or interactive support
2 Beginning	• general language related to the content areas • phrases or short sentences • oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede the meaning of the communication when presented with one- to multiple-step commands, directions, questions, or a series of statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support
1 Entering	• pictorial or graphic representation of the language of the content areas • words, phrases, or chunks of language when presented with one-step commands, directions, WH-, choice, or yes/no questions, or statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support • oral language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede meaning when presented with basic oral commands, direct questions, or simple statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support

Session Survey

Date: ____ / _____ / _____

Session name:

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Please circle a number at the end of each question.

Question	Not				Extremely
How satisfied are you with the information provided?	1	2	3	4	5
How would you rate the quality of the handouts?	1	2	3	4	5
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Questions/Comments/Suggestions:

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Day 3: Modeling of Research-Based Vocabulary Instruction for ELLs

Goal: To introduce research-based instructional strategies that will support the development of vocabulary skills in the core content areas for ELLs.

Objectives: Attendees will identify and use research-based strategies to support the vocabulary instruction of ELLs.

Video 1: Effective Instructional Strategies for ELLs

Video 2: Ineffective Instructional Strategies for ELLs

Day 3 Activities:

1. Discuss additional factors to be considered when identifying appropriate vocabulary instruction for ELLs.
2. Identify appropriate strategies that have been identified as effective when providing ELLs vocabulary instruction.
3. Additional resources (e.g., technology, intervention programs) that will help facilitate the vocabulary instruction of ELLs.
4. What appropriate vocabulary instruction should look like for ELLs?

- Participants will watch a 5-minute video about strategies that teachers in other areas of the country have found effective for supporting ELLs.
- Participants will view a 5-minute video featuring two case study students, one who received explicit vocabulary instruction and one who did not, and how their academic experiences impacted their outcomes.
- During instructional modeling and role-playing activities, participants will note any positive and negative behaviors the teacher and student exhibited after each activity. The observation worksheet will be distributed before the activities begin.
- Attendees will be asked to complete a session survey at the end of the workshop.

Session Survey

Date: ____ / _____ / _____

Session name:

_____

Please circle a number at the end of each question.

Question	Not				Extremely
How satisfied are you with the information provided?	1	2	3	4	5
How would you rate the quality of the handouts?	1	2	3	4	5
How well did the facilitator present the information?	1	2	3	4	5
How beneficial was this workshop in terms of increasing your knowledge?	1	2	3	4	5
How likely are you to use the information/strategies/resources in your lesson plans?	1	2	3	4	5

Professional Development History

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- ◯ I have attended 6 or more ELL workshops.

Questions/Comments/Suggestions:

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Burns, M. (2017). *The reading brain: How your brain helps you read, and why it matters*. https://www.scilearn.com/the-reading-brain/#:~:text=The%20temporal%20lobe%20is%20responsible,grammar%20in%20our%20native%20language.

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Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Exploring Core Subject Area Vocabulary Instructional Strategies for Middle School English Language Learners

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Self-assessing, how would you rate your knowledge of evidence-based instructional strategies for English Language Learners?
    - **Developing** *(having little knowledge)*
    - **Proficient** *(a solid foundation with some implementation in my classroom)*
    - **Accomplished** *(above average foundation and consistent implementation in my classroom)*
    - **Distinguished** *(superior knowledge and working with teachers outside my classroom with implementation in their classrooms)*
2. In the last five years, in how many PD workshops or trainings have you attended that focused on best teaching practices to support ELL vocabulary development? How were they structured?
3. Do you utilize any strategies, resources, and/or instructional practices that are specific to ELL learners?
    a. How do you choose any of the specific strategies, resources, and instructional practices that you use with your ELL students?
4. In the last year, how many research-based articles have you read that focused on best testing practices to support ELL vocabulary development?
    a. Of the ____ researched based articles you've read, which practices worked best for the ELs you serve?

5. Based on student data (EOGs, EOCs, benchmarks), how would you describe the average growth of your ELL students in the area of _____ *(your content area)?*
    - Less than non-ELLs
    - Same/Equal to Non-ELs
    - Higher than non-ELLs
6. How do you assess the effectiveness of the instruction or strategies that you provide for ELs?
7. How would you rate your confidence-level when providing vocabulary instruction and strategies to EL students?
    - **Developing** *(having little knowledge)*
    - **Proficient** *(a solid foundation with some implementation in my classroom)*
    - **Accomplished** *(above average foundation and consistent implementation in my classroom)*
    - **Distinguished** *(superior knowledge and working with teachers outside my classroom with implementation in their classrooms)*
8. What is your belief when it comes to whether all students have the ability to grow or demonstrate proficiency regardless of factors such as language barriers?
9. If an ELL student does not demonstrate growth in vocabulary acquisition, what additional support (e.g., interventions) is provided?
10. What supplemental resources, including technology-based resources, do you use to help facilitate vocabulary instruction for ELLs?

11. What data do you use to assess ELLs' progress throughout the school year?
12. How do you collaborate with the ELL teacher or other ELL professionals to ensure that the resources and strategies that you use are effective for ELL students?