TEFL Journal

Vo 2, No 1, 2024

Proficiency and the Success of English Language Learners in Reading comprehension

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Article Info

Article History

Received:
1 January 2024

Accepted:
1 March 2024

Keywords

Reading comprehension, Proficiency, Success of English Language Learners

Abstract

The reality of today's classrooms is that students have varied abilities and needs. The diverse population of learners includes students who are high performing in reading as well as those who struggle with reading. This research concerns struggling readers. The goal of teachers is to identify struggling readers and discover ways to address the reading needs of those students. Pinnell (2006) stated that teachers have a common goal: to make literacy a true part of the lives of all students.There are many interventions to help struggling readers. Reading Recovery (RR) is a short-term reading intervention program designed to help the children develop effective strategies for reading and reach average levels for their particular peer group (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Research has confirmed the positive impact of RR on readers who struggle (Allington, 2005; Clay, 1993; McKee, 2006; Schwartz, 2005). In particular, Allington (2005) outlined five principles of scientific reading instruction: (a) classroom organization; (b) matching pupils to texts; (c) access to interesting texts, choice, and collaboration; (d) writing and reading; and (e) expert tutoring. Research has shown that RR addresses four of these five principles.

Introduction

Allington (2005) stated matching pupils to texts is critical for those students whose development lags behind their peers. An empirical study conducted by O'Connor et al. (2002) found that struggling readers fail to benefit from lessons using grade-level text. According to Fountas and Pinnell (1996), RR matches pupils to the appropriate text level, provides interesting texts to students, gives students a choice in the selection of some texts, and allows teachers and students

to collaborate with one another about book choice and selection. Another principle addressed by RR is reading and writing. Tierney and Shanahan (as cited by Allington, 2005) examined the natural reciprocity of reading and writing. Composing can enhance comprehension, and spelling can facilitate decoding. One element of a RR lesson incorporates a writing segment that encourages the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing.

Statement of the Problem

Educators have to shift their thinking to embrace cultural differences and make adjustments in teaching practices, teaching policies, and teaching procedures. Acknowledging different languages and cultures plays an integral part in educating all students and addressing the needs of all students. Most ELLs are being labeled as struggling readers. Many factors could be contributing to this problem. Of interest in this study was the level of oral language proficiency exhibited by

ELLs. Language plays a central role in mental development. Johnston (2004) suggested, "Talk is a central tool of a teacher's trade. With it they mediate children's activity and experience, and help them make sense of learning, literacy, life, and themselves" (p.4). In conducting this study, the researcher posited the level of oral language acquisition of ELLs would have an impact on the students' successful completion in RR.

Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the oral language proficiency of children learning English and the relationship between oral language and success in RR. Examining current RR practices in identifying students for participation in RR provided guidance in addressing reading progress of ELLs. The goal of this study examines the use of the ROL to assess the needs of ELLs participating in RR and the impact this information will have on the success rate of ELLs in RR.

Research Questions

Based on the mentioned objective of the study, the following research questions are presented:

1. For children learning English completing Reading Recovery intervention, is there a statistically significant difference in oral language proficiency by time, as measured by Record of Oral Language (pretest vs. posttest)?

2. For children learning English completing Reading Recovery intervention, is there a statistically significant difference in student achievement, as measured by Text Reading Level, by time (pretest vs. posttest)?
3. For children learning English completing Reading Recovery intervention, is there a statistically significant difference in student achievement, as measured by HRSIW, by time (pretest vs. posttest)?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the proposed research questions, the following hypotheses are constructed:

1. For children learning English completing Reading Recovery intervention, there is no statistically significant difference in oral language proficiency by time, as measured by Record of Oral Language (pretest vs. posttest).
2. For children learning English completing Reading Recovery intervention, there is no statistically significant difference in student achievement, as measured by Text Reading Level, by time (pretest vs. posttest).
3. For children learning English completing Reading Recovery intervention, there is no statistically significant difference in student achievement, as measured by HRSIW, by time (pretest vs. posttest).

Significance of the Study

Reading Recovery is a research-based early literacy intervention that addresses the needs of struggling readers in first grade (Clay, 1993). Research has shown the positive effects of RR with native English-speaking students, but does not address diverse populations (Allington, 2005; Clay, 1993; McKee, 2006; Schwartz, 2005). As populations change, the definition of struggling readers changes. Teachers can no longer ignore the needs of cultural diversification and its impact on the labeling of struggling students. As advocates of learning, teachers need to construct an environment to address the needs of all students and provide assessments that lead to a better understanding of all learners. School populations continue to change and become more diverse in language, learning styles, backgrounds, and ethnicity. This study will focus on improving reading skills and reading achievement of children learning English.

Literature Review

Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery is an early intervention program developed by Clay (1985) to help children who are struggling with the reading process. RR is a daily, 30-minute one-on-one tutoring session provided to the young readers. Participation in RR relies on the results from the Observation Survey (OS). There are six tasks entailed in the OS. These six tasks are:

1. Letter identification.
2. Word test.
3. Writing vocabulary.

According to Clay (2002), "The observation tasks were designed to make a teacher attend to how children work at learning in the classroom" (p.13). Clay (1993) outlined strategies all readers must have mastered to become successful readers. These include:

1. The knowledge of how the world works.
2. Possible meanings of text.
3. Sentence structure.
4. The importance of order of ideas, words, or letters.

The tasks of the OS provide systematic observations of what a child can do and what strategy a child uses to complete the various tasks. Using the OS as an indicator of reading abilities guides RR teachers to make informed decisions on teaching strategies to address the needs of the learner. Cunningham and Allington (1999) stated no other remedial program has come close to achieving the results of Reading Recovery.

Phillips, Norris, Maynard, and Osmond (2002) conducted a longitudinal study of 187 children from first through sixth grades and concluded, "Early success with reading remains a critical goal, because as children grow older and remain poor readers, successful reading performance grows less likely" (p. 11). Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, and Moody (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of 31 studies of one on one reading tutoring programs. The authors concluded that well-designed, reliably implemented one on one interventions could make significant contributions to improving reading outcomes for many students at risk. The educational system can no longer wait to address the needs of struggling readers. Juel (1988) conducted a longitudinal study of 54 children from first through fourth grades. From this research, Juel suggested, "a vicious cycle seemed evident regarding children who did not develop reading skills in first grade and their dislike of reading both in and out of school" (p. 445). The safety net of Reading Recovery

identifies first grade readers that struggle and provides opportunities for struggling readers to achieve early success with reading.

The author stated, "The children who participated in Reading Recovery in the first grade appeared to be on equal footing with their classmates in Grade 3 and 4" (p. 72). Richards (2004) concluded that if students can have the opportunity to complete this short-term intervention in first grade, they might defy predictions of failure. High stakes testing and budget cuts force educators to examine reading programs to ascertain the effectiveness of reading intervention programs.

Reading Recovery and English Language Learners

According to Thompson, Vaughn, Prater, and Cirino (2006) research for reading intervention with ELLs is not as extensive as with monolingual English students, although there are studies that have examined the efficacy of reading interventions with ELLs with reading difficulties. A study conducted by Neal and Kelly (1999) found RR is an effective intervention for low-scoring children who are acquiring English concurrent with learning how to read and write in English-speaking classrooms. Ashdown and Simic (2000) examined 25,601 first-grade students who received RR instruction in order to evaluate the performance of the students who were English language learners. The results suggested that RR is an effective intervention that narrows the achievement gap between English speaking students and English language learners. The appropriate setting of one-to-one tutoring offered by RR supports language and literacy development for students with limited English proficiency. There are still gaps between what we know about monolingual readers and what we know about bilingual readers, especially those identified with reading difficulties (Vaughn, et al., 2006). More research is needed concerning ELLs, language-learning processes, and a theoretical base for decisions-making regarding ELLs (Craighead & Ramanathan, 2007).

Methodology

Quantitative methodology using statistical data will be used in the study. A quantitative approach utilizes strategies of inquiry and collects data on predetermined instruments that generate statistical data (Creswell, 2003). In this study, the quantitative method will be used to examine the relationship between oral language proficiency of children learning English and student achievement in RR. This study also determined if oral language proficiency predicted text reading level at the conclusion of this reading intervention. According to Creswell (2003) "With

pre-experimental designs, the researcher studies a single group and provides an intervention during the experiment" (p. 167). There are three types of pre-experimental designs. These include one-shot case study, one-group pretest-posttest design, and static group or posttest-only with nonequivalent groups (Creswell, 2003). For this study, a single group pretest- posttest design will be utilized. This design includes a pretest followed by a treatment and a posttest for a single group (Creswell, 2003). The single group in the study consists of children learning English participating in RR. A pretest will be administered followed by the treatment of RR intervention and a posttest for the single group.

Participants of the Study

The site for conducting this study will be English Language Institutes Participants of this study will include approximately 30 children learning English receiving intensive interventions in reading through RR. This study used a nonrandom, convenience sample basing the selection of students to receive RR intervention on the results from the Observation Survey (OS) developed by Clay (1993).

Treatment

The treatment used in this single group pretest posttest design will be RR intervention. Students participating in RR will receive instruction in reading and writing for 30 minutes each day from teachers. Students will receive this intervention until for up to 10 weeks.

Instrumentation and Materials

Participation in RR relies on the results from the Observation Survey (OS). There are six tasks entailed in the OS. These six tasks are letter identification, word test, writing vocabulary, concepts about print, hearing and recording sounds in words, and text reading level. According to Clay (2002), "The observation tasks were designed to make a teacher attend to how children work at learning in the classroom" (p.13). For the purpose of this research, three types of instruments will be utilized for this single group pretest posttest design (Table 1). The instruments for this research includes Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (HRSIW) and Text Reading Level (TRL) from the Observation Survey (OS; Clay, 2002) and The Record of Oral Language (ROL; Clay, Gill, Glynn, McNaughton, & Salmon, 1999). These instruments assess phonological awareness, students' reading behaviors, and oral language proficiency.

Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (HRSIW)

This instrument consists of a sentence dictated by the teacher for the student to record. The student is encouraged to write what he can hear in the dictated words. Scores show how successful the student was at hearing the sounds in words and recording those sounds in English spelling. The ability to hear sounds in words and write the sounds is an authentic task one encounters in the real world. The scoring procedure provides one point for each correctly analyzed and recorded phoneme (sound). The possible scores range from 0 to 37 points. Points are given for graphemes that record the sound even if spelling is not correct (e.g., 'skol' for 'school'). The scores indicate the student's ability to analyze the word he or she hears and to record in letters the sounds he can hear. The National Reading Panel's (NRP, 2000) findings identified phonological awareness and letter knowledge as the two best predictors of how well children will learn to read during the first 2 years of instruction. Reliability measures of HRSIW, determined in 1990, yielded a Cronbach alpha of .96 (Clay, 2005). This instrument is given at the beginning and end of the RR intervention.

Text Reading Level

The instrument of text reading level uses methods of recording a student's reading behaviors; such as correct reading, errors, substitutions, omissions, self-corrections, and so on. Reading behaviors are recorded as students read a book from a packet of test books used by all RR teachers. The reading behaviors are recorded on a running record form (Clay, 2002). Running records encapsulate what readers said and did while reading continuous text. The running record is used as a check on whether the text is appropriate in difficulty, neither too difficult nor too easy. A conversion chart is used to convert error rate to a percentage accuracy score. The highest text level with 90% accuracy or above is the text level score. Text reading level is assessed at the beginning of RR intervention and at the end of the intervention.

The Record of Oral Language

Attention is given to oral language in circumstances where the language a child uses in the home is different from the language used in the classroom. Being proficient in oral language is considered important for communicating ideas and for self-expression. The Record of Oral Language (Clay, et al., 2005) is a normative, standardized test. The ROL aids teachers in observing aspects of a child's control over oral language and assessing a child's ability to handle selected grammatical structures (Clay, et al., 2005).

There are three levels of sentences, with Level 1 sentences being the easiest. Each level consists of fourteen sentences. The administration of this task involves the teacher reading each sentence aloud to the student and the student attempts to repeat each sentence. Clay, et al. (2005) recommended beginning with Level 2 sentences. Each correctly repeated sentence is given a score of one point. If a student scores between 3 and 11 points, Level 1 sentences are administered followed by Level 3 sentences. If a child scores between 0 and 2 points, Level 1 sentences are administered. A score of 12 or more points credits the child with passing Level 1 sentences. Sentence repetition procedures provide insight into how children master different language structures found in English sentences. No single linguistic criterion has been devised for predicting reliably the difficulty of the sentences. The most reliable guide to difficulty is the nature of children's responses. This assessment will be administered to students during the fourth week of participation in RR and at the completion of the intervention.

Data Collection and Analysis

For participation in this study, the researcher will collect the related data. The data collection will occur prior to RR intervention and at the end of the intervention. Data will be entered into The Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. The descriptive statistics will include the frequencies and percentages, means and standard deviations. Descriptive statistics are statistical procedures used to organize, summarize, and simplify data (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2008).

Research question 1, 2, and 3 involve dependent samples t tests. The dependent sample t test for correlated means is an appropriate statistical analysis if each of the two samples can be matched on a particular characteristic (Pagano, 2010). To investigate research question 4, two linear regressions will be conducted to assess if level of oral language proficiency at posttest predicts student achievement at posttest. The predictor variables oral language proficiency and the criterion or outcome variable is student achievement. Two instruments, HRSIW and TRL, will measure student achievement. One linear regression will be conducted for each of the outcome variables.

Data Analysis and Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the oral language proficiency of children learning English and the relationship between oral language and success in RR. This section presents the major findings of the study.

The following research questions and hypotheses were addressed in this study:

1. For children learning English completing Reading Recovery intervention, is there a statistically significant difference in oral language proficiency by time, as measured by Record of Oral Language (pretest vs. posttest)?
2. For children learning English completing Reading Recovery intervention, is there a statistically significant difference in student achievement, as measured by Text Reading Level, by time (pretest vs. posttest)?
3. For children learning English completing Reading Recovery intervention, is there a statistically significant difference in student achievement, as measured by HRSIW, by time (pretest vs. posttest)?
4. For children learning English completing Reading Recovery intervention, does level of oral language proficiency at posttest predict student achievement, as measured by HRSIW and Text Reading Level?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the proposed research questions, the following hypotheses are constructed:

1. For children learning English completing Reading Recovery intervention, there is no statistically significant difference in oral language proficiency by time, as measured by Record of Oral Language (pretest vs. posttest).
2. For children learning English completing Reading Recovery intervention, there is no statistically significant difference in student achievement, as measured by Text Reading Level, by time (pretest vs. posttest).
3. For children learning English completing Reading Recovery intervention, there is no statistically significant difference in student achievement, as measured by HRSIW, by time (pretest vs. posttest).
4. For children learning English completing Reading Recovery intervention, level of oral language proficiency at posttest does not predict student achievement, as measured by HRSIW and Text Reading Level.

The participants were assessed at pretest and at posttest with three instruments:

Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (HRSIW), Text Reading Level (TRL), and Record of Oral Language (ROL). Outliers were removed prior to analysis for all dependent variables and achieved by transforming the values to standardized z scores and deleting items that were above

the value of 3.29. For the HRSIW at pretest the minimum score was 2.0 and the maximum score was 36.00 (*M* = 21.63, *SD* = 10.54) and at posttest the minimum score was 26.00 and the maximum score was 37.00 (*M* = 34.45, *SD* = 2.73. For the TRL at pretest, the minimum score was 0.00 and the maximum score was 5.00 (*M* = 1.07, *SD* = 1.41), while the posttest minimum score was 4.00 and the maximum score was 24.00 (*M* = 13.98, *SD* = 4.23). For the ROL, the pretest minimum score was 0.00 with a maximum of 32.00 (*M* = 11.65, *SD* = 7.07) and at posttest, the minimum score was 5.00 and the maximum was 36.00 (*M* = 16.54, *SD* = 7.55). Means and standard deviation for pretest and posttest scores are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Pretest and Posttest Scores on the Instruments (N = 57)

	Pretest		Posttest	
Instrument	M	SD	M	SD
Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (HRSIW)	21.63	10.54	34.45	2.73
Text Reading Level (TRL)	1.07	1.41	13.98	4.23
Record of Oral Language	11.65	7.07	16.54	7.55

Descriptive Data and Findings

Hypothesis 1

A dependent samples *t* test was conducted to investigate Hypothesis 1 and to determine if For children learning English completing Reading Recovery intervention, there is any statistically significant difference in oral language proficiency by time, as measured by Record of Oral Language (pretest vs. posttest). The mean difference was *t* (55) = - 10.60, *p* = .001, *d* = .32. The mean difference was -4.68 with a 95% confidence interval of -5.56 and -3.79 points. The mean ROL posttest score (*M* = 16.54, *SD* = 7.55) was statistically significantly greater than the mean ROL pretest score (*M* = 11.86, *SD* = 6.96). Using Cohen's (1988) guidelines, the effect size of .32, indicating the difference, although statistically significant, is small. The null hypothesis was rejected; for the entire sample, there was a statistically significant difference in oral language proficiency, as measured by ROL before and after the Reading Recovery Intervention. Students received higher scores at posttest as compared to pretest. Results of the dependent sample *t* test are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Dependent Sample t-Test on Record of Oral Language by Time (Pretest vs. Posttest)

	Pretest		Posttest				
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	t	p	d
Record of Oral Language	11.86	6.96	16.54	7.55	-10.60	.001	.32

Hypothesis 2

To investigate Hypothesis 2, and to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in student achievement, as measured by Text Reading Level (TRL), among children learning English completing Reading Recovery Intervention by time (pretest vs. posttest), a dependent samples *t* test was conducted. The dependent sample *t* test was statistically significant, *t* (55) = -26.43, *p* = .001, *d* = 2.33. The mean difference was -12.73 with a confidence interval of -13.70 and -11.77 points. The mean TRL posttest score (*M* = 13.80, *SD* = 4.05) was statistically significantly greater than the mean TRL pretest score (*M* = 1.07, *SD* = 1.41). Using Cohen's (1988) guidelines, the effect size of 2.33 indicates the difference between the two scores is large. The null hypothesis was rejected; for the entire sample, there was a statistically significant difference in student achievement, as measured by TRL before and after the Reading Recovery intervention. Students received higher scores at posttest as compared to pretest. Results of the dependent sample *t* test are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Dependent Sample t-Test on Text Reading Level by Time (Pretest vs. Posttest)

	Pretest		Posttest				
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	t	p	d
Text Reading Level	1.07	1.41	13.80	4.04	-26.43	.001	2.33

Hypothesis 3

To investigate Hypothesis 3, and to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in student achievement, as measured by Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (HRSIW), among children learning English completing Reading

Recovery Intervention by time (pretest vs. posttest), a dependent samples *t* test was conducted. The dependent sample t-test was statistically significant, *t* (54) = - 9.66, *p* = .001, *d* = .95. The mean difference was -12.69 with a 95% confidence interval of -15.23 and -10.06 points.

The mean HRSIW posttest score (*M* = 34.40, *SD* = 2.73) was statistically significantly greater than the mean HRSIW pretest score (*M* = 21.71, *SD* = 10.62). Using Cohen's (1988) guidelines, the effect size of .95 indicates the difference between the two scores is large. The null hypothesis was rejected; for the entire sample, there was a statistically significant difference in student achievement, as measured by the HRSIW before and after the Reading Recovery Intervention. Students received higher scores at posttest as compared to pretest. Results of the dependent sample *t* test are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Dependent Sample t-Test on Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words by Time (Pretest vs. Posttest)

	Pretest		Posttest				
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	t	p	d
Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words	21.71	10.62	34.40	2.73	-9.66	.001	.95

Hypothesis 4

To examine Hypothesis 4, and to determine if level of oral language proficiency at posttest predicts student achievement as measured by TRL and HRSIW among children learning English completing Reading Recovery Intervention, two linear regressions were conducted. The first regression investigated whether level of oral language proficiency predicted student achievement as measured by Text Reading Level (TRL). The results of the regression were significant, *F* (1, 54) = 25.63, *p* = .001, R2 = .32, suggesting that oral language proficiency at posttest predicted text level reading at posttest. The results for the regression are summarized in Table 5 and suggest that for every one unit increase in oral language proficiency at posttest, text level reading will increase by 0.32 units. Orallanguage proficiency must increase by 3.1 points to yield a one level increase on the TRL. The second regression investigated whether level of oral language proficiency predicted student achievement at posttest as measured by Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (HRSIW). The results of the regression were significant, *F* (1, 53) = 13.85, *p* = .001, R2 = .21, suggesting that oral language proficiency at posttest predicted performance on HRSIW. The results for the regression are summarized in Table 5 and suggest that for every one unit increase in oral language proficiency at posttest, HRSIW will increase by .15 units. Oral

language proficiency must increase by 6.7 points to yield a one phoneme increase on the HRSIW.

Table 5

Linear Regressions with Oral Language Proficiency Predicting Student Achievement at Posttest

Student achievement variable	B	SE	β	t	p
Text Reading Level	0.32	0.06	.57	5.06	.001
Hearing and Recording of Sounds in Words	0.15	0.04	.46	3.73	.001

This study examined the relationship between oral language proficiency and student achievement in Reading Recovery using a sample of 57 children learning English. Students were evaluated prior to Reading Recovery intervention and after intervention. Hypothesis 1 examined whether or not a significant difference was found in oral language proficiency by time, before and after Reading Recovery intervention. The results of the dependent sample *t* test were statistically significant, the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a statistically significant difference in oral language proficiency by time; students received higher mean scores following participation in Reading Recovery intervention.

Hypothesis 2 examined whether or not a significant difference was found in student achievement, as measured by Text Reading Level by time, before and after Reading Recovery Intervention. The results of the dependent sample *t*-test were statistically significant, the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a statistically significant difference in student achievement by time; students received higher mean scores on TRL following participation in Reading Recovery intervention.

Hypothesis 3 examined whether or not a significant difference was found in student achievement, as measured by Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words, by time, before and after Reading Recovery intervention. The results of the dependent sample *t*test were statistically significant, the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a statistically significant difference in student achievement by time; students received higher mean scores on HRSIW following participation in Reading Recovery intervention.

Hypothesis 4 examined whether or not level of oral language proficiency predicted student achievement, as measured by HRSIW and TRL, after Reading Recovery intervention. The results of the linear regressions were statistically significant, and the null hypothesis was

rejected. Oral language proficiency at posttest predicted student achievement at posttest. In each of the four analyses, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion, Conclusion, Implications, and Suggestions

Summary of the Findings

This study examined the relationship between oral language proficiency and student achievement in Reading Recovery using a sample of 57 children learning English. Students were evaluated prior to Reading Recovery intervention and after intervention. Hypothesis 1 examined whether or not a significant difference was found in oral language proficiency by time, before and after Reading Recovery intervention. The results of the dependent sample *t* test were statistically significant, the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a statistically significant difference in oral language proficiency by time; students received higher mean scores following participation in Reading Recovery intervention.

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Hypothesis 4 examined whether or not level of oral language proficiency predicted student achievement, as measured by HRSIW and TRL, after Reading Recovery intervention. The results of the linear regressions were statistically significant, and the null hypothesis was rejected. Oral language proficiency at posttest predicted student achievement at posttest. In each of the four analyses, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion of the Findings

This study examined the relationship between oral language proficiency and

student achievement in RR using a sample of 57 children learning English. Students were evaluated prior to RR intervention and after intervention. In each of the four analyses, the null hypothesis was rejected. Reading Recovery intervention impacted children oral language proficiency skills, resulting in higher posttest scores.

It is vital for educators to have a clear understanding of how language develops and how English structures are acquired by children who are learning to read and write (Clay, 1991). To measure oral language acquisition, ROL was administered to children learning English prior to RR intervention and after RR intervention. The findings indicated higher scores at posttest as compared to pretest. Text Reading Level (TRL) assesses the student's reading behaviors. It informs the teacher about how the learner searches for information in printed texts and how the learner works with that information (Clay, 1993). The findings indicated there was a statistically significant difference in student achievement before and after RR intervention. Students received higher scores at posttest as compared to pretest.

Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (HRSIW) measures the ability to hear sounds in words and write the letters associated with the sounds. Clay (1991) stated, "The sounds of speech are a very complex code and a written alphabet is a simple substitution cipher" (p. 82). The findings in this study indicated there was a statistically significant difference in student achievement, as measured by HRSIW before and after RR intervention.

Oral language proficiency at posttest predicted TRL and performance on HRSIW among children learning English participating in RR intervention. Proficiency in oral language is important for self-expression and communicating ideas (Clay, 1991). The results of the linear regressions were statistically significant indicating oral language proficiency at posttest predicted student achievement at posttest.

The findings of this study suggest the importance of oral language acquisition of students. Healy (as cited by Gentile, 2003) stated, "Language shapes language shapes thinking, and language shapes brains" (p. vii). Understanding of oral language acquisition occurs in constructivist classrooms where students construct their own knowledge of literacy skills. Clay (1991) stated, "As children search for meaning in print they are able to notice new things about words or print or messages, constructively linking these to other things they know" (p. 319). In constructivist classrooms, the best teaching and learning occurs within the child's zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD is the place where a child can perform a task with the guidance

from an appropriate adult. Clay (1991) refers to the ZPD as the 'cutting edge of learning' concept. Teachers need to create more opportunities for students to work within their ZPD by creating stimulating activities and opportunities for growth. The teacher works with the student to allow him to do what he can accomplish alone but shares the activity when the student reaches some limit.

Oral language must be modeled by teachers continually for ELLs to understand language structures. Language should be engaging and in a meaningful context.

Conversations lead to thinking and learning so there should be frequent and sustained time to speak, listen, read, and write. Interactions in classrooms acknowledge the students and their own distinct culture. Classrooms should be organized for whole group, small group, and individual learning (Johnson, 2006). Activities to boost oral language learning should include rich conversations about the children's interests and motivate children to try new ways of expressing their own personal stories.

Implications of the Study

This study focused on improving reading skills and reading achievement of children learning English. As advocates of learning, teachers need to construct an environment to address the needs of all students and provide assessments that lead to a better understanding of all learners. Cunningham and Allington (1999) stated, "What the classroom teacher does day in and day out, minute-by-minute, has the greatest effect on what children learn" (p. 256). As our school populations continue to change, our teaching practices have to continue to change to prepare our students for the world of tomorrow.

Suggestions for Further Research

More research is needed concerning ELLs, language-learning processes, and a theoretical base for decision-making regarding ELLs (Craighead & Ramanathan, 2007). Future research needs to continue to explore the factors that affect student achievement of ELLs. Research on instructional approaches that provide support of oral language development is needed to promote success in reading by ELLs. Future research should be conducted on appropriate assessment tools and how to use the data to diagnose students' needs to target instruction and academic interventions.

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