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Title: “I don’t know understand what it’s asking me!”: Using Games to Understand and Use Academic Language

Research Question:

How can previewing academic vocabulary through explicit instruction, complemented with vocabulary games, help 4th grade students understand and use targeted academic and content specific words in oral and written language?

Research Activities:

This study occurred in a 4th grade classroom in a rural public school. The intervention was conducted with the entire class of twenty-nine students. However, data were collected and analyzed on a focus group of 6 students of varying academic abilities.

Three focus students were English Language Learners with CELDT scores ranging from beginning to early advanced. The other three focus students were English Only students performing at various levels in language arts. The intervention lasted a period of 3 weeks and utilized competition based games to teach and reinforce the correct usage of general academic and content specific vocabulary words. Data were collected in the form of attitude surveys, teacher-created vocabulary assessments, participation data, behavioral tallies and field notes collected during game playing, and parent surveys on vocabulary usage at home. The purpose of this intervention was to determine if using vocabulary games that are competition based and that require students to use the targeted words, rather than memorize their meanings, would increase their ability to use the words correctly and increase their engagement in learning vocabulary. Students played a series of games using targeted vocabulary words. The games included: Bluff, Back Words, Word Branches, and Vocabulary Loop-around. Comparison of baseline and outcome data showed improvement in usage of targeted words, as well as increased engagement and

enjoyment in learning vocabulary. The mean score of focus students on the vocabulary assessment improved from 18% pre-intervention to 78% post-intervention, a growth of 60%. The results of the survey and interviews with focus students suggested that using competitive games in which students must use the targeted words in oral and written language may be an effective way to engage and motivate students to learn and understand academic language.

Grade Level: Elementary, Fourth Grade

Project Descriptors: Survey-attitude, Observation-behavior tallies, Vocabulary assessment, English Language Development, Vocabulary development, Cooperative learning

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Introduction

From day 1, it was clear that my 4th grade students were intelligent, caring, understanding and hardworking. They were engaged in the class work, discussions, and individualized conferences with me. Most of them demonstrated knowledge of the content and ability to express that knowledge through language orally. While grading the first set of assessments in reading comprehension and math, I expected high levels of achievement. To my surprise, the scores were not matching up with the knowledge that the students had shown me through conversation and in-class work. Well now I was curious. I knew these students truly had an understanding of the material. So how come they were not being successful on the assessments? Through further investigation and discussions with the students, I discovered that it was the phrasing of the test questions that confused them. It was not a matter of whether they understood the material or not, it was that they did not understand what the questions were asking them to do. It became my goal to help them learn the academic language to be able to understand it and use it in their conversations.

Research Question: How can previewing academic vocabulary through explicit instruction, complemented with vocabulary games help 4th grade students understand and use targeted academic and content specific words in oral and written language?

Sub questions:

- How will the use of vocabulary games improve students' attitudes towards learning vocabulary?
- In what ways will using vocabulary games affect student engagement and participation in class?
- What role will student engagement have in student's understanding and use of targeted vocabulary words?

Definition of Key Terms:

Academic Vocabulary: words that are used in a school setting, including both content specific and general words that are used across the curriculum (i.e.: identify, explain, etc.).

Content specific words: words that pertain in certain subject areas, but are not used across the curriculum (i.e.: antibodies, relevant, etc.).

Instructional Games: fun, interactive, and competition driven activities with the goal of enhancing learning.

Context**Community**

The Roscoe Elementary School¹ is located in the small town of Roscoe about 60 miles north of Sacramento. The community surrounding the school is a very small agricultural town. There are many orchards in the surrounding areas that grow pears and almonds, as well as rice farms and mills that employ many of the residents of the county. Over the past couple of years, new housing developments have been built and it is continuing to slowly grow. The population of the town is 4,826. Of those, 61.36% are of Hispanic origin, less than 2% Asian, less than 2% American Indian, and the other remaining percentage are Caucasian. The average household income is \$39,535, which is approximately \$4,000 less than the national average. The median house price in Roscoe, however, is about \$83,000 more than the national median. This discrepancy may help account for the 67% of students that received free or reduced price lunch in the district (Great Schools).

District

The Point Joint Unified School District is comprised of one K-5 elementary school, one K-6 elementary school, one 6-8 junior high school, one 9-12 senior high school and one continuation high school which serves the educational needs of the communities of Roscoe, University City, Dellitan, Greens, and the surrounding areas. The district's student demographics include the following ethnicity: 69% Hispanic, 28% White and 2% African American (District Website).

¹ To maintain confidentiality, all names of sites and students are pseudonyms.

School

Roscoe Elementary has 540 students. The majority of the students are bussed in from outlying rural areas. There are 26 regular education classrooms on site with 3 other classrooms devoted to Special Education and intervention programs. The school has a wonderful support staff including a reading specialist, ELD teacher, P.E. teacher, music teacher, and literacy coach.

The school's API for 2007 was 728. This was an improvement from 2006, which the API was 697. The school met its growth target for 2006-2007. The school's AYP met 20 of the 21 criteria. The only criterion that was not met, was the requirement for English Learners who scored Proficient or above in English/Language Arts. The school is in Year 2 of Program Improvement. For English Learners school-wide, 1% scored at the Advanced Level, 23% at Early Advanced, 45% at the Intermediate Level, 20% at Early Intermediate Level, and 11% at the Beginning Level. 62.88% of students at the school are English Language Learners with 99% of those speaking Spanish as their home language.

Class

Peek into Room 15, and you will see 5 clusters with 5 desks each arranged throughout the room. Towards the back of the room are 2 pairs of desks for students who need to have a more individual workspace. Student work is posted throughout the room on all of the walls and windows. There is a designated reading area which has a bookcase full of books ranging from beginning picture books to more advanced chapter books. There are 3 computers set up for student use and cabinets full of art supplies and dictionaries. Students have organized desks, many of them keep a silent reading book at their seat to read when they are finished with an assignment.

I have a diverse class of 4th graders. All of my students have positive attitudes while in the classroom which benefits all of them. A positive attitude toward school and a close community feeling hold our class together and allow us to accomplish much more academics in a day than many other classes in the school, from my previous experiences. This classroom community was established through group activities during the first week of school, a clear expectation of respect and honor, and is continuously being strengthened through class meetings and discussions of group goals. The class is consistently discussing areas that need improvement and figuring out ways to make that improvement. They have a strong desire to have integrity and an overall school environment that encourages them to be that way. That is an area my class is strong in and prides itself in.

About 43% of my students scored Proficient or above on the CST Math portion at the end of the 3rd grade. For many, this is their greatest academic strength. Their scores on the CST Language Arts test, were not as impressive. Only 11% scored Proficient or above. Scores are presented in Table 1.

The English Language Learners especially are challenged by academic language and new vocabulary. Their everyday conversation skills are excellent. For example, every student is capable of having a conversation with peers or adults about their lives and other every day events. The majority of the students in my class lack verbal presentation skills and have difficulties verbalizing their responses when related to academic topics. When speaking to one another on a casual basis, all except one student will use appropriate conversational English in the classroom. They use complete sentences and generally use grammatical rules correctly. They occasionally search for the correct word, but overall have a good

everyday vocabulary. This shows me that they have the capability to listen and comprehend in English. It is the use of academic language that seems to cause them difficulties. For example, students struggle with understanding questions such as, “*Determine* the meaning of _____,” and other questions that use academic language.

Table 1

3rd Grade CST Scores

Student	CST Math	CST Language Arts	Total at Each Level
Alejandro A.*	BB	FB	4 FBB
Aly	BB	FB	
Alicia	BB	FB	
Moesha*	BB	FB	
Oscar	B	BB	4BB
Diego*	BB	BB	
Jose*	BB	BB	
Fabian*	B	BB	
Michael	BB	B	14 B
Mariah*	BB	B	
Lyzette*	B	B	
Analie*	B	B	
Berenice*	B	B	
Daniel*	B	B	
Romeo*	B	B	
Gina	B	B	
Maryanne	P	B	
Beatty*	P	B	
Alliyah*	P	B	
Kelly	P	B	
Sandra*	P	B	
Bernardo*	A	B	
Grant	P	P	7 P
Sadie*	P	P	
Charlie	P	P	
Ferdinand*	P	P	
Emma	P	P	
Sandy	A	P	
Horario*	A	P	

A= Advanced

P= Proficient

B= Basic

BB= Below Basic

FB= Far Below Basic

*= ELL Students

Students

The students I focused on for my research were a diverse group of EL and EO ranging from low achieving scores to high achieving scores in language arts. They all attended this school last year for 3rd grade. The group consisted of 3 boys and 3 girls. Of them, 3 are English Learners and 3 are English only students.

Alejandro

Alejandro is one focus student who is an EL at the beginning CELDT level. He has only been in the United States for 2 years. Alejandro is humorous and squirrely. He has a difficult time staying focused on his class work and often distracts the students around him. Since the beginning of the year, he has made improvements with staying on task and being actively involved in classroom discussions and assignments.

Romeo

Romeo is another EL focus student at an Intermediate CELDT level. Romeo is hard working but easily distractible. He gets off task easily and constantly needs redirection. He is well liked by his classmates. He is not afraid to ask for help or clarification when he needs it.

Bernardo

Bernardo is an EL scoring at the early advanced CELDT level. In class, he does high achieving work, but his tests scores do not always show that. He is inconsistent, but is always a hard worker. Although shy, Bernardo stands out above his classmates in his ability to express himself through oral language. When he does speak out in discussions, he is skilled in putting his thoughts into words and presenting them in a way that is understandable.

Gina

Gina is a low performing EO student. She has a sweet soul but sometimes gets caught up in the drama of fourth grade. She needs to be reminded to stay focused on herself and not everyone else. The social distractions have been Gina's biggest obstacle to staying on task and getting her work done. Like Romeo, she recognizes her need for support and will ask for it when needed.

Maryanne

Maryanne is an EO, proficient language arts student. Maryanne is full of life. She is well-known for her constant smile that spreads from ear to ear. Maryanne has an excellent work ethic and continuously wants to volunteer to share in class. She is the student that always has a funny anecdote to share. Although she is eager to learn, she has a difficult time retaining new information over time.

Sandy

Sandy is an advanced, EO language arts student. She is in GATE. She works hard, is mature, and responsible. Sandy expresses herself well and is usually engaged in our class activities. Most questions she has are not about the material being taught, but about clarification of directions.

In general, this group of students has diverse academic strengths, weaknesses, and needs. However, all of these focus students could benefit from an intervention. Interactions with peers and highly engaging activities would help them stay focused and develop the English language.

Rationale

I knew language arts was an area of concern for my population of students due to a large number, 18 of the 29, of English learners. After I gave a

survey to my students, I discovered areas that many found difficult as well as those that students were willing to try to get better at. Many also did not find learning vocabulary to be fun. Although they did not enjoy learning vocabulary, the class overall did note that they were motivated to learn vocabulary. I wanted to focus on an area that students were motivated to learn and that would benefit them academically. I gave a survey asking students their opinions on how difficult reading, writing, and vocabulary were for them, as well as how much they enjoyed those subjects and how hard they were willing to work in order to get better in those areas (Appendix A). Throughout the year, we have been discussing academic language, so the term is familiar to students. I found that the question on the survey that said, "Academic vocabulary is hard for me to understand," showed a median score of 1 which meant they strongly agreed with that statement.

I also compared test scores to students' in class performances. From this comparison I found that many students are not scoring well on the tests, but have the knowledge of the content. For example, one focus student, Maryanne, scored 6 out of 10 reading comprehension questions correct. Before the assessment, Maryanne was able to summarize the story to her partner and discuss all important aspects of the story. Immediately after the assessment, I discussed the story with Maryanne and orally went through the assessment questions. She was able to answer all of the questions correctly when I reworded them in a way that she could understand. She knew the information but had a difficult time when it came to the test. After having short interviews where I asked my focus students about their test taking strategies and what aspects of tests they found to be difficult, it became clear that the language used in test

questions was difficult for them to understand. For example, the test asked students to “distinguish” between characteristics of 2 characters in the story. The word “distinguish” was a word that many students did not understand. When students are unable to determine what the test is asking them to do, it becomes difficult for them to answer correctly. Improving their knowledge and understanding of academic language was the focus of my research.

I collected vocabulary graphic organizers (Appendix B) as well as vocabulary assessments from Open Court Reading from my entire 4th grade class. These samples were collected from all students, during the third and fourth week of school. Vocabulary graphic organizers are part of each student’s writer’s notebook. These are organizers that they use to fill out definitions, sentences and pictures of their vocabulary words from the story of the week. The vocabulary assessments are taken at the end of each week using the same words from the vocabulary organizers and presented in multiple choice questions. Table 2 shows focus students’ scores on weekly organizers and assessments.

Table 2

Vocabulary Scores Compared to Graphic Organizer Scores

Focus Students	% used correctly on Week 3 Organizer	% correct on Week 3 Assessment	% used correctly on Week 4 Organizer	% correct on Week 4 Assessment
Alejandro	20	40	20	20
Romeo	60	80	60	100
Bernardo	80	100	100	100
Gina	80	80	40	60
Maryanne	80	100	80	80
Sandy	80	100	80	100

During the week, the organizer required students to use the vocabulary words correctly in sentences that they created on their own. Students had a difficult time doing this but did much better on the assessments that were multiple choice and therefore more like a matching assignment. Students were able to identify the correct meaning when it was an option, but struggled to use the words in sentences of their own. This proved to be true for not only the lower performing EL student, but for all students including the highest performing EO student.

I discovered that although sometimes incorrect usage on the organizers resulted in incorrect answers on the assessment, it was not every time. Often times, students used the words incorrectly on the organizers but then answered correctly on the assessment. From this I can see that students may understand the word, but have a difficult time using it correctly in text. When asked to show the meaning of the word by using it in their own words, students struggled. When presented with a multiple choice setting, students could choose the correct meaning. The test from Open Court Reading used a multiple choice format. The data indicates that this format does not provide a valid way of assessing what vocabulary students have learned.

According to Crawford, the lack of vocabulary knowledge that English Language Learners have when they are reading in their second language is often an obstacle to comprehension (Crawford, 2005). Since my classroom consists of 62% English Language Learners, second language development needs to be of utmost importance. A focus on vocabulary should help ELs not only understand the individual words better, but be able to apply their vocabulary knowledge to reading comprehension in the future.

Instructional Approach

In order to improve their understanding, I explicitly taught the words with examples, sentences, definitions, and usages to introduce them to the words. The words were selected from 4th grade standards and curriculum based on several criteria. They were words that name or relate to central concepts addressed in current content areas, widely applicable words that students will encounter across subject areas, and words that are relevant to current subject material and are vital for students to understand (Kinsella & Feldman, 2004). These criteria, as set out by Kinsella and Feldman, were the basis for choosing the targeted academic vocabulary words for the intervention.

After explicitly teaching the words, I incorporated vocabulary review activities including Vocabulary Loop-a-rounds, Back Words, Bluff, and Word Branches. Table 3 discusses these games in more detail. These fun activities reinforced the language and engaged the students to improve their understanding of the words. Through research, I found that playing oral games with the words to encourage oral language development before written language development is an important aspect of learning academic vocabulary (Bromley,

2007). According to Wilkinson and Silliman (2000), learning is a social activity. Interpersonal behaviors both observed and enacted in the classroom are the basis for new conceptual understanding in cognition and communication. Also, there is a strong relationship between oral and written language learning. Students need to be actively engaged and be motivated for learning to have the best chance of achieving full “communicative competence” (Wilkinson & Silliman, 2000). The use of interactive games and mix of oral and written language through the games, should help keep students engaged and motivated to learn through social interaction.

The focus on being able to use the words is an important part of understanding the vocabulary. “Knowing a word can not be identified with knowing a definition” (Nagy & Scott, 2000). Through the use of games students should become comfortable in using the words. The assessment addresses their ability to understand the meaning, but also their ability to use the words correctly. The knowledge of a definition does not signify a knowledge of the word. With the support of the intervention, I expect students to be better able to understand and use the targeted academic words as well as have a more positive attitude towards the learning of vocabulary. The intervention examined students understanding of academic vocabulary words through the use of explicit teaching and fun vocabulary activities. The students were explicitly taught 10 targeted words each week, including definition, proper usages, and examples. Over the course of each week, students engaged in oral and written vocabulary activities that reinforced their knowledge and expanded their ability to use the words on a daily basis. Working with me and other students, the students engaged in activities that included exposure, verbal usage, peer interaction,

active learning, directed conversations, word play, and group interactions. A minimum of 30 minutes each day were devoted for the intervention. On days where students are presenting work, or taking the assessment, more time was allotted as necessary. The intervention began the last week in November and lasted through the end of the second week of December.

Table 3

Games Outline

Game	Description of Game	Purpose
Vocabulary Loop-Around Materials: Flashcards with definition on one side and non-corresponding target word on the other side	One student reads the definition on their card. The student who has the matching word, comes to the front, reads their word, flips their card, and reads the next definition. The cycle continues until the first student is back up front reading their word. Each group is timed and tries to go faster than their previous times and the other groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to recognize definition and match it to the correct word. • Familiarize students with the words • Allow them to develop an understanding of the word with a scaffold • Competition for motivation and engagement
Bluff Materials: Targeted Word List	When I say the word, students on one team who know the meaning will stand. If they do not know the meaning, they may stand and “bluff”. I call on 3 of the students who are standing. If they all have a clear understanding of the word, their team gets 1 point for each person who stood. If they do not have a clear understanding, their team will get no points.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group dependence for points for motivation • Familiarize students with the words. • Competition keeps them engaged and motivated.
Back Words Materials: Note cards of targeted words	Each student receives a note card with one of the week’s targeted words. The note card goes on their back and they must talk with the other members of the class, asking yes or no questions to determine what their word is. Groups try to be the first group to finish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of oral language • Know the meaning of the words well enough to both ask and answer appropriate questions • Competition to keep students motivated and engaged.
Word Branches Materials: Poster paper, markers, word list, thesaurus for referencing	Students create a poster for their word using each letter of the word to branch off with a word beginning with that letter that relates to the targeted word (including but not limited to examples/non-examples and synonyms/antonyms)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of written language to express their understanding of the words • Expand their ability to understand the words by using synonyms/antonyms • Competition to keep students participating and motivated

Instructional Cycle

Week 1, Day 1: Discussed with the students why learning academic language is so important and got their opinions about the language used on tests that can be

confusing. Had students take the pre-intervention assessment. The selection of words was done before this day based on the information as stated above.

Week 1, Day 2: Introduced and explicitly taught the 10 vocabulary words for week 1. Verbally taught the meaning, showed usages, examples, and logographic cues. Had students discuss with their partners and share examples. Students had a graphic organizer to keep track of their words. I had usable definitions available for students, examples prepared, and pictures to show them. I also needed to use this time to keep observational notes on focus students.

Week 1, Day 3: Review explicitly the targeted words for the week. Had students discuss and share. Had students get into groups of 5 to play Back Words. Each student received a note card with one of the week's targeted words. The note card went on their back and they had to talk with the other members of the class, asking yes or no questions to determine what their word was. They had to know the meanings in order to find their word as well as to be able to help other students figure out their word on their back. I needed to have note cards of the week's targeted words prepared and tape to tape it to their backs. I needed to use this time for observational notes.

Week 1, Day 4: Students got into groups of 3 or 4. Each group was responsible for 1 targeted word for Word Branches. Students created a poster for their word using each letter of the word to branch off with a word beginning with that letter that relates to the targeted word (including but not limited to examples/non-examples and synonyms/antonyms). Students shared their poster with the class. Students needed poster paper, markers, colored pencils, and crayons.

Week 1, Day 5: Students formed groups of 5 to play Vocabulary Loop Around. They were given 5 minutes to review their vocabulary graphic organizers.

Flashcards were prepared with a definition on one side and a non-corresponding target word on the other side. One student read the definition on their card. The student who had the matching word, came to the front, read their word, flipped their card, and read the next definition. The cycle continued until the first student was back up front reading their word. Groups competed against themselves and the other groups for the fastest time through the cycle. I needed to have cycle flashcards prepared and a stop watch. On this day, students also took the end of the week assessment on the targeted words for this week.

Week 2, Day 1: Explicitly taught and modeled use, examples, and sentences of next 10 targeted words. I showed students logographic cues for each word. Had students use their graphic organizers to write and organize their thoughts and reminders about this set of words. Had students practice using the words with the partners, creating sentences of their own that show they understand the meaning of the word. Students needed their graphic organizers. I needed to have pictures and examples ready for them to see.

Week 2, Day 2: Reviewed targeted words for the week. Students participated in an activity called Bluff. Have class divided into two teams. The goal for the students was to receive the most number of points. In order to get a point, they had to know the meaning of the targeted word I said. When I said the word, students on one team who knew the meaning stood. If they did not know the meaning, they could stand and "bluff". I called on 3 of the students who were standing. If they all had a clear understanding of the word, their team got 1 point for each person who stood. If they did not have a clear understanding, their team

got no points. Both teams had opportunities to show their understanding of the targeted words. I used this time to record observational notes.

Week 2, Day 3: Reviewed explicitly the targeted words for the week. Had students discuss and share. Had students get into groups of 5 to play Back Words. I needed to have note cards of the week's targeted words prepared and tape to tape it to their backs. I needed to use this time for observational notes.

Week 2, Day 4: Reviewed targeted vocabulary words. Students got into groups of 3 or 4. Each group was responsible for 1 targeted word for Word Branches. Students needed poster paper, markers, colored pencils, and crayons.

Week 2, Day 5: Students got into groups of 5 to play Vocabulary Loop Around. They were given 5 minutes to review their vocabulary graphic organizers. Flashcards were prepared and a stop watch timed each group. On this day, students also took the end of the week assessment on the targeted words for this week.

Week 3, Day 1: Explicitly taught and modeled use, examples, and sentences of next 10 targeted words. Showed students logographic cues for each word. Had students use their graphic organizers to write and organize their thoughts and reminders about this set of words. Had students practice using the words with the partners, creating sentences and examples. Students needed their graphic organizers. I needed to have pictures and examples ready for them to see.

Week 3, Day 2: Reviewed targeted words for the week. Students participated in Bluff. I used this time to record observational notes.

Week 3, Day 3: Reviewed explicitly the targeted words for the week. Had students discuss and share. Students played Back Words. I used this time for observational notes.

Week 3, Day 4: Reviewed targeted vocabulary words. Students worked on their Word Branches using this week's words. Students shared their poster with the class. Students needed poster paper, markers, colored pencils, and crayons.

Week 3, Day 5: Students reviewed the words. Groups played the Vocabulary Loop Around. Students took the end of the week assessment. Later in the day, students took the post-intervention assessment, which used the same targeted words as the pre-intervention assessment, and the post-intervention survey.

Data

Baseline Data

To establish a baseline the students took a pre-intervention assessment using a sample of 20 of the 30 targeted words, chosen from the targeted word list, presented in Table 4, at random. The targeted word list was created using criteria established by Kinsella and Feldman (2004). General academic and content words were selected that occur on test questions and reading material from 4th grade curricula: Scott Foresman Mathematics, Open Court Reading, Scott Foresman Social Studies and Houghton Mifflin Science.

Table 4

Vocabulary Word List and Source of Word

Academic Vocabulary Word	Source
Summarize	Step Up to Writing
Sequence	Scott Foresman Math
Simplify	Scott Foresman Math
Plague	Open Court
Infect	Open Court
Fact	Scott Foresman Social Studies
Opinion	Scott Foresman Social Studies
Microbe	Open Court
Antibodies	Open Court
Bacteria	Open Court
Fatal	Open Court
Persuade	Step Up to Writing
Explain	Houghton Mifflin Science
Suture	Open Court
Colleagues	Open Court
Prepare	Step Up to Writing
Inform	Houghton Mifflin Science
Demonstrate	Houghton Mifflin Science
Preview	Open Court
Compare	Scott Foresman Social Studies
Contrast	Scott Foresman Social Studies
Circulate	Houghton Mifflin Science
Incision	Open Court
Admire	Open Court
Entertain	Open Court
Gorge	Scott Foresman Social Studies
Controversial	Open Court
Practitioner	Open Court
Adjective	Grammar
Adverb	Grammar

These words were vital for understanding the content, related to current content and were encountered across subject areas. All students were given the assessment on the day before the intervention activities began. The class was silent, as they would be in any other assessment situation. They were not allowed to discuss with other members of the class. The assessment has students determine the appropriate use of the words, state definitions, and use the words in context. Throughout the course of the intervention, students were given a weekly written assessment of 5 of the week's 10 words, to determine their understanding and ability to use the targeted words for that week. At the end of the intervention, students took the same assessment that they took pre-intervention to determine their growth in understanding. In determining the student's knowledge of the vocabulary, a correct idea was counted as a correct answer, even if the grammar and spelling was incorrect. It was the understanding of the word that I was focused on and the details of their writing were not being stressed during this intervention.

All students took a survey, as stated earlier, about their attitudes towards reading, writing, and vocabulary. The survey took place in class and they were told that this would not affect any aspect of school. I would not grade them differently or think differently of them. I also gave them the option of not putting their name on it, though none of them left their name off. I wanted them to know that their responses had no influence on grades or my opinions of them so they would answer honestly. These results guided my intervention. I looked at each question and organized the data based on the responses for each question. I kept count of each response and created a table that showed the number of responses at each level (1-5) for each question. Using this organizer, I could look

at particular questions and determine patterns related to specific areas. I specifically looked at question 6 which students responded to how difficult they felt academic vocabulary was to understand. This allowed me to see that academic vocabulary was an area that students needed help in. It also allowed me to see what students had a desire to learn and were willing to work hard in order to achieve success. Students will take a post-intervention survey to determine their attitudes after the intervention.

With the focus students, I took a step further and had short face to face interviews with each of them in order to dive deeper in my understanding of their responses on the survey. This allowed me to determine reasons behind their answers and continue to support the intervention.

In order for the intervention to be informative and successful, students had to be actively engaged. To determine students' levels of engagement, I collected data during their activities to measure how involved they were. I used a Likert Scale with 1 being not actively involved and 5 being very actively involved. The observations were collected every 6 minutes throughout each day's vocabulary game, with a quick check to determine how students were involved. I also recorded how well focus students understood and used the targeted words correctly on a daily basis during the vocabulary games.

Baseline Survey Results

The data, represented in Table 5, showed me that my students felt differently about learning vocabulary. Some felt it is fun but others disagreed.

Table 5

Students' Total Ratings on Survey Questions N=29

Rating	1	2	3	4	5	Median Rating

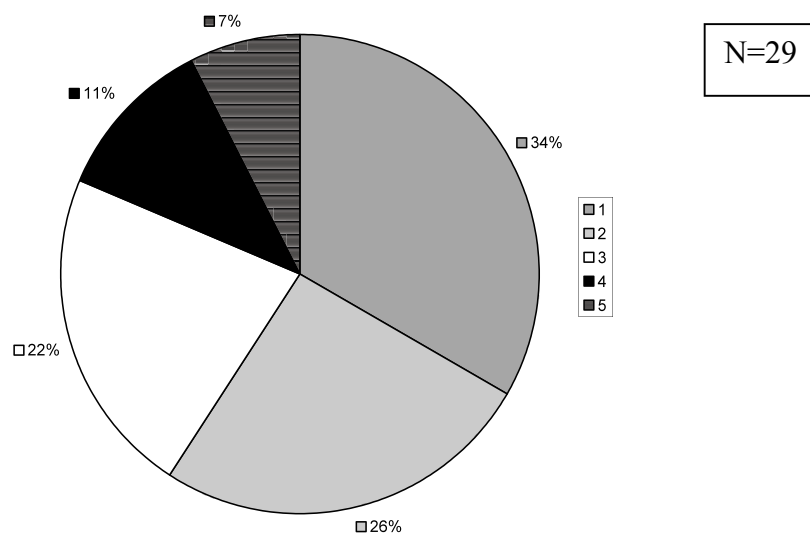
Q1: I like to read	15	6	5	0	1	1
Q2: Learning new vocabulary words is fun.	9	7	6	3	2	2
Q3: I am a good reader.	14	7	5	0	1	1
Q4: I would like to become a better reader.	18	4	3	1	1	1
Q5: I am willing to work hard to become a better reader.	19	3	5	0	0	1
Q6: Academic language is hard for me to understand.	15	6	3	1	2	1
Q7: I would like to learn new vocabulary.	10	6	8	1	1	2
Q8: I am a good writer.	10	4	6	5	2	2
Q9: I am willing to spend more time on vocabulary in order to understand it better.	15	5	7	0	0	1
Q10: I would like help to become a better student.	22	2	1	1	1	1
Q11: Writing is fun.	8	8	8	2	1	2
Q12: Language arts is my favorite subject.	5	3	8	4	6	3

1= Strongly Agree 2= Agree 3= Neutral 4= Disagree 5= Strongly Disagree

One thing that many of them had in common was that they were interested in learning it. Many said they were willing to work harder in order to become better at vocabulary. This was encouraging because motivation and enthusiasm towards learning can make a huge difference in achievement. My ELLs strongly felt that vocabulary is difficult. This makes sense being that it is their second language and is a struggling piece for many ELLs. Students took this survey again at the end of the intervention.

Figure 1

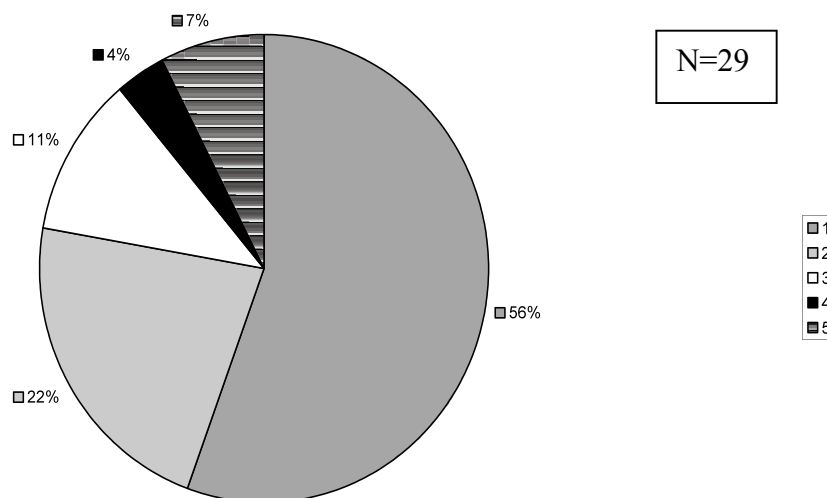
**Question 2 Rating Response Distribution:
Learning new vocabulary is fun.**



Thirty-four percent (34%) of students strongly agreed with the statement that learning new vocabulary words is fun (Figure 1). That means that 66% of students did not strongly agree with that statement. If students are not enthused about learning vocabulary words it can be much more difficult for them to be fully engaged and actively learning. One purpose of the intervention was to increase student enthusiasm and interest toward learning new vocabulary words.

Figure 2

**Question 6 Rating Response Distribution:
Academic language is hard for me to understand.**



In addition, 56% of students strongly agreed that academic language is difficult for them to understand (Figure 2). Academic language is an important area to understand as students progress through their educational careers. Throughout the intervention, I planned to expose students to more academic language and have them use them to the point where it becomes comfortable and easily understood. A similar survey was given at the end of the intervention to measure if their attitudes have changed when they are actively learning through games.

Baseline Interview Results

After the results of the survey, I wanted to get a deeper understanding of how the students felt, so I interviewed my focus students. I took notes when I asked questions about their responses to the questions relating to vocabulary. I asked them to explain why academic language was so difficult for them and to

explain to me what they thought academic language really meant. I also asked them to explain why they did not enjoy learning new vocabulary words and what would make the learning process more fun.

Some of their responses suggested that my intervention would be one that they would be engaged. They did not know reasons of why academic language was so difficult. There were a couple ideas, but none of them were sure. One focus student said that it was difficult because they seem to mean different things in different situations (Bernardo). Focus student Gina knew she needed to know the words to understand the tests, but didn't understand that the words would apply in other situations as well. She said that she thought the "test makers want to confuse us" (Gina).

When asked about vocabulary not being fun, one student said, "Vocabulary is boring because it's just a lot of listening" (Alejandro). In order to address this student's concern I wanted to try to incorporate more interaction between the students, thus creating the game idea. Also contributing to this decision was another student who said, "We should compete against each other to see who can learn the words first. I think I'd do better" (Romeo). So with these types of ideas being brought to my attention from my focus students, I created the intervention to include games that are competitive to help motivate and improve the enjoyment of learning vocabulary.

Baseline Vocabulary Assessment Results

Students took a 20 question assessment (Appendix C) where they were asked to give meaning of words, or use them in their own sentences. Students had not been taught these words this year; it was solely based on prior

knowledge. The 20 words chosen for the assessment were a mix of content specific and general academic words from the 30 words that were taught over the course of the intervention. On the assessment, I only focused on the results of my focus students. Their results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Focus Students' Scores on Baseline Assessment

Student	Raw Score	Percentage
Gina	4/20	20%
Maryanne	5/20	25%
Sandy	6/20	30%
Alejandro*	1/20	5%
Romeo*	3/20	15%
Bernardo*	3/20	15%
Mean	3.67/20	18%

* = ELL Students

The English Only students performed better over all compared to the English Learners, however none of them had a clear understanding of the words. This was expected given that it was based on only prior knowledge.

I also felt it was important to look at content specific words compared to the general academic words to see which, if any, was more difficult for the students. The assessment consisted of 10 content specific words and 10 general academic words. By breaking them down into these groups, I could see if they were more familiar with certain types of words than others. Table 7 shows the results.

Table 7

Focus Students' Scores Based on Word Type

Student	Content Specific Raw Score	General Academic Raw Score
Gina	3/10	1 /10
Maryanne	2/10	3/10
Sandy	0/10	6/10
Alejandro*	0/10	1/10
Romeo*	1/10	2/10
Bernardo*	1/10	2/10

* ELL Students

Through analyzing the data, there was a slight difference between knowledge of the content specific words and the general academic words. The academic words were more commonly correct than the content specific with 15 correct responses out of a possible 60 for general academic words and 7 out of 60 content specific words. This might have been because of the repetition across subject areas, or the more common uses in everyday conversation. The difference between the two types of words was not a large difference. This showed that a general vocabulary focus would benefit the students, both EO and ELL.

Understanding and being able to use new vocabulary was the focus of the intervention. I looked more closely at whether the students were able to use the words correctly in their own words, if they needed a prompt, or if they knew the meaning. 7 questions on the pre-intervention assessment had students defining particular words. These questions were designed to be the easiest and require the most basic amount of knowledge about a word. Nine questions asked students to complete the sentence in order to show that they had a clear understanding of what the words meant. Students were given a sentence stem. Though this required a deeper level of understanding and the ability to apply the word to a situation, this was not the most advanced type of question asked. The focus students had a difficult time with these types of questions, but the EO students

performed better than the EL students. Four questions on the pre-intervention assessment asked students to write a “show-me-you-know” sentence using a particular word. This was meant to be the most difficult task because no sentence starter was given and students had to create the sentence solely on their own and show that they knew what the word meant. This required not only a deep level of understanding of the vocabulary words, but also the ability to create a situation in which the word would be explained. This task was difficult for all of the focus students. Table 8 represents the correct responses based on the prompt of question being asked.

Table 8
Focus Students' Scores Based on Question Prompt on Baseline Vocabulary Assessment

Student	Meaning of Words % Correct	Given Sentence Stem % Correct	"Show-me-you-know" Sentence % Correct
Words Used	Summarize, fact, entertain, inform, demonstrate, practitioner, infect	Simplify, antibodies, persuade, admire, preview, compare, fatal, opinion, contrast	Plague, suture, gorge, controversial
Gina	29	22	0
Maryanne	43	22	0
Sandy	43	33	0
Alejandro*	14	0	0
Romeo*	29	11	0
Bernardo*	14	22	0

* EL students

No focus students were able to use a vocabulary word correctly in their own sentences in the pre-intervention assessment. The slightly easier task of completing a sentence stem was more successful. The high performing English Only student was able to complete the sentence stem correctly 3 out of 9 times. The EL students were less successful than the EO students on this task. This task involved more knowledge of the English language and the ability to take their knowledge of the word and display that through their own words. When students were asked to provide the meaning of the word, all focus students were successful in providing the correct definition for at least one targeted vocabulary word. The EO students had a higher overall percentage than the EL students on this type of question as well.

In the Midst Data

Throughout the intervention, I was constantly observing, monitoring, and having students monitor their group members. I took observational notes during each game that was played in five minute intervals. During the game Bluff, I kept records on when the focus students stood for having an understanding of the

word and their response when I called on them. The focus students had similar actions each week during this game. Table 9 shows the times that focus students stood during each week.

Table 9

Focus Students' Responses During Bluff

Student	# of times stood during Week 1	# of times stood during Week 2	# of times stood during Week 3
Sandy	5/5	5/5	5/5
Maryanne	4/5	5/5	3/5
Gina	2/5	2/5	2/5
Alejandro*	1/5	1/5	2/5
Romeo*	3/5	3/5	2/5
Bernardo*	4/5	5/5	4/5

* EL Students

Of the times that the focus students were called on when standing, all responded with a correct understanding of the word in question. Due to the fact that focus students were not called on every time they stood, their percentage of accuracy was difficult to ascertain.

During the Word Branch game, I observed each group for 5 minutes, taking notes on their participation and correct usage of the words. This game proved to be very difficult for most students. The Word Branch game required students to use words starting with specific letters that related to the given vocabulary word. Although students are comfortable with synonyms, antonyms, examples, and non-examples, they struggled with finding related words. This task was difficult especially for the ELLs in my class. It involved so much knowledge of other vocabulary words as well as being able to think about similar and opposite words. It involved too much for the ELLs to be able to piece together and think of corresponding words. The EO students had a slightly easier time with this game, though it still was difficult. The interesting thing was

that even though this game was so difficult, the students in my class did not get frustrated. I gave points for effort, participation, and cooperative group work. All students were actively involved. They were brainstorming together, building off of each other's ideas, and having great discussions as they worked through the words. My class continued to keep trying which at least showed that the motivation for the game was there. Due to this level of engagement and motivation, I decided to continue to include the game in the rest of the weeks of the intervention, despite the difficulties it presented to the students. They were not successful in completing the task, but I felt they were using the words and developing ideas that were benefiting their understanding and vocabulary development.

During Back Words, I observed the students as they walked throughout the room asking questions about their words. I particularly observed the focus students and recorded information about their interactions. One focus student that raised some concern for me was Alejandro. As he was trying to determine his word, he had a difficult time formulating his questions. He struggled with trying to decide what information was important to ask and how to put his thoughts into words. When he did finally formulate a question, it took on average 3 times per encounter to make his question in a "yes/no" format. Due to this struggle, Alejandro had a difficult time discovering his word and was the last one to be successful in figuring it out. The opposite situation happened with Sandy. Sandy was able to quickly ask 5 people questions and had solved her mystery word within the first 5 minutes. She was the first one done. She had no difficulties formulating her questions or determining what questions were

important in narrowing down her word. This gave her an advantage over Alejandro who struggled to formulate questions.

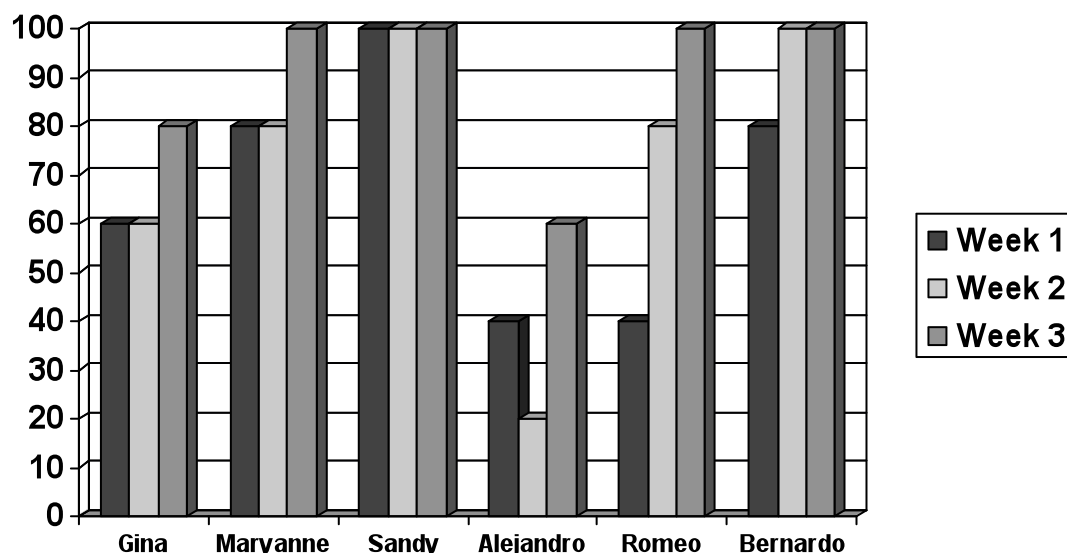
The last game that was observed each week was the Vocabulary Loop Around. My observations again led me to see that students were very engaged in this activity. They were given 5 minutes to study before the game began. During that time, students were using different strategies to try to remember the words. Some were using the strategy of "Read, Cover, Recite, Check." Others were having their neighbors quiz them and others were having conversations about the words with their neighbors, discussing how to explain the word and using synonyms. Although this study time was not an assessed moment of the activity, it allowed me to see how well the students were using the words in their own ways. The data I collected on the focus students during this time showed that all of the focus students except Alejandro, were verbally discussing the words with their neighbors during study time and talking their way through the meaning and use correctly. Alejandro was being quizzed by his neighbor and was told the meaning of every word he was asked. Although this was not promising data for his success during the activity, he was actively on task, and had the support to help him become more familiar and more comfortable with recognizing the words. These five minutes of study time showed me a lot of information about my students and their level of engagement during the intervention. They were very excited and motivated to learn the words and be able to perform to help their team win the fastest time. The five minutes of self-guided study time became a true showing of the motivation and active participation that my class displayed during the intervention.

During the Vocabulary Loop Around game, all students were engaged and the competition level increased greatly. As each group went to the front to try to beat the other groups times, you could feel the excitement in the room grow. As the last group was up, even the groups whose times had already been beaten were listening intently, hoping that the last group wouldn't beat their time. While they were intently listening, they did not realize that they were also being exposed time and time again to the words and their meanings as the other groups presented. The level of engagement during this game was high and encouraged students to understand the words.

Another form of data I collected during the intervention was a weekly assessment that focused on five of the week's ten words. The format was similar to the format of the pre- and post-assessment and is a format that the class is familiar with. On these assessments, I saw that the focus students were improving from week to week (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Focus Students' Weekly Vocabulary Assessment Scores



By the end of the intervention, the focus students' scores on the weekly assessment had progressed. Sandy was successful from Week 1, whereas the others worked to grow by the end of the intervention. By the end, 4 out of the 6 focus students scored 5/5 on the weekly assessment. The focus students who did not reach the 5/5 level were the two lower performing students. Gina and Alejandro did show growth by Week 3's weekly assessment though, which was the goal.

Outcome Data

Outcome Survey Results

At the end of the 3 week intervention, the entire class was given a survey.

This survey was the same survey they took before the intervention and asked them about their attitudes on different aspects of reading, writing, and vocabulary. Although I did not expect much change on the questions about reading and writing, I expected to see some changes on the questions about vocabulary. I wanted to keep things consistent, so I left the same questions about

reading and writing. The two questions that I focused on were Question 2: Learning new vocabulary is fun, and Question 6: Academic vocabulary is hard for me to understand. The pre- and post-intervention results for these two questions are presented in Figure 4 and 5.

Figure 4

**Question 2 Post Intervention Rating Response Distribution:
Learning new vocabulary is fun.**

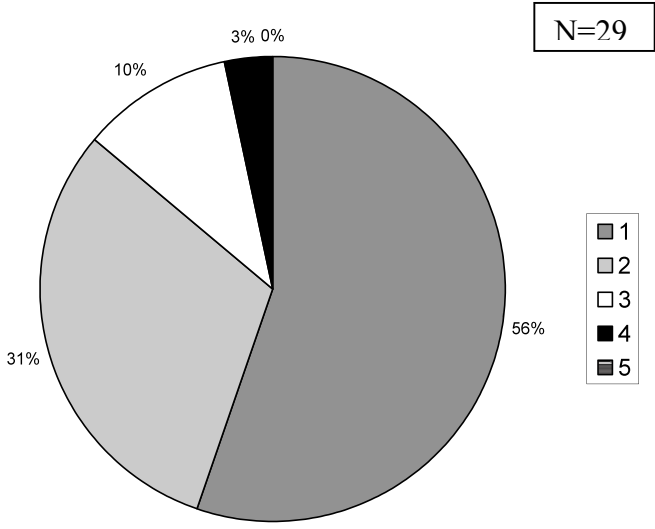
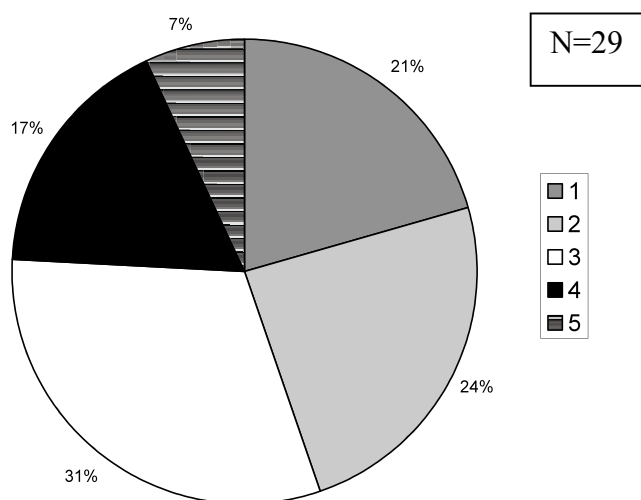


Figure 5

**Question 6 Post Intervention Rating Response Distribution:
Academic language is hard for me to understand.**



The growth between the responses from pre-intervention to post-intervention was noticeable. Before the intervention, the median response for “vocabulary is fun to learn” was a 2, meaning that most agreed with that statement. After the intervention, the median changed from a 2 to a 1, meaning that most strongly agreed that learning vocabulary is fun. Students were engaged and actively participating in games that were competitive and educational at the same time.

On Question 6 (Figure 5) about academic vocabulary being difficult for the students to understand, the response median changed from a 1, being that students strongly agreed that academic vocabulary was hard, to a 3, being that they felt neutral about the vocabulary being difficult. This showed growth in this area. Students felt more confident about learning academic vocabulary. They

now had new strategies to help them learn and those strategies happened to be fun as well.

Outcome Interview Results

After the survey, I interviewed my focus students one on one to gain a deeper understanding of their responses on the survey. First, I just talked to them about their survey responses. When asked why she marked that she strongly agreed with the statement "Learning new vocabulary is fun," Gina responded, "For the last couple of weeks all we have done is played! That's fun!" Romeo had a similar response when he said, "We tried to be better than other groups. That's what I wanted to do. I wanted to compete, just like we do on our own at recess." It can be seen that the competitive nature of the games was what got the students interested and engaged in the vocabulary words. When asked about why they responded that they disagreed with the statement, "Academic language is hard for me to understand," Bernardo told me that he felt fine with any vocabulary that he was asked to learn. He said he learned that he just needed to use the words in any way that he could to be able to really understand the words. Since he knew what worked for him, he felt he could learn any new words. Maryanne also responded that she disagreed with that statement. She said, "I know how to learn them. At first I had a hard time with it, but after all those games I could do it." The students shared that they had learned new strategies of how to approach learning new words and that made them more confident with their abilities to learn new academic language.

I also took the opportunity when I had the students one on one to show them their pre-intervention survey and post-intervention survey side by side.

They were able to look and compare their responses from before the intervention to after. Their reactions were quite shocking. Maryanne said, "I don't know why I responded that I didn't like learning vocabulary. I definitely like it now." Sandy showed great confidence in her post-intervention survey and interview. She said to me that she liked the games we played and was able to see how she could use the words not just in school but at home too. She was very proud of the fact that she went home and told her mom that she knows that the reason she has to wash her hands before dinner is so that the bacteria from the things she touches doesn't get into her body and make her sick. After hearing this story, I spoke to Sandy's mother and asked her if she really came home and said that. Her mother informed me that it was a true story and Sandy was constantly using new words and explaining to her mom what they meant. She was so confident and proud of herself for knowing them.

Outcome Parent Survey Results

After hearing this story from Sandy's mother, I decided to send home a letter and short survey for parents to take about their students' use of new words at home. The letter explained what we had done in class with the word games and asked parents to answer 3 yes or no questions about the way their children were speaking at home. I informed them that the results of the survey were for my information only and would not affect their child's grades. The survey asked:

1. Have you noticed a change in the words your child is using at home?
2. Does your child let you know when he/she has used a word that he/she learned at school?

3. Does your child take the time to explain the meaning of words he/she is using?

Of the 29 surveys I sent home, I received 24 of them back. The results showed that 10 of the 24 parents surveyed noticed a difference in the words their kids were using at home. Of those ten, 7 of them responded that their child told them when they used a word from school, and 3 of them explained the meaning of the word. Though not a majority of the students were applying what they learned to something outside of school, the fact that any of them took that information elsewhere was promising and was another indicator of engagement. They were able to retain that information and complete understanding to be able to apply it in a non-academic setting. I think it also helped the students realize that the things they learn in school can be applicable to real life situations. It helped them connect school life and home life which is so important in their learning.

Outcome Vocabulary Assessment Results

The same assessment was given as a pre and post assessment. It used the same 20 of the 30 targeted vocabulary words. The questions involved knowing the meaning, using the word correctly when given a sentence stem and also creating a sentence that shows the meaning of the word. The results for the focus students are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Focus Students' Scores on Outcome Assessment

Student	Raw Score	Percentage
Gina	16/20	80%
Maryanne	16/20	80%
Sandy	19/20	95%
Alejandro*	6/20	30%
Romeo*	19/20	95%
Bernardo*	17/20	85%
Mean	15.5/20	78%

* = ELL Students

All students showed growth from the pre-intervention assessment to the post-intervention assessment. Only one focus student, Alejandro, did not reach a level that demonstrates an understanding of the vocabulary words. Pre-intervention, Alejandro struggled to put what he understood in writing, and post-intervention, he still displayed the same type of responses. The greatest growth came from focus student Romeo, an average achieving English Language Learner. He reached a level of understanding equal to that of the high performing English Only student. Romeo showed the ability to understand and use 19 of the 20 targeted vocabulary words. Overall growth was impressive. Growth from all students was expected because prior to the intervention, students were assessed on solely their prior knowledge. After the intervention they had been exposed to and given multiple opportunities to discuss and use the words to become familiar and comfortable with them.

In comparing the pre-intervention assessment to the post-intervention assessment, an overall growth can be seen. Focus students were also more successful on certain words than others. A word by word breakdown in Table 13 shows the words that students seemed to have a better grasp on from the beginning. It also shows that by the end, there were not any particular words that continued to be a problem.

Table 13
Word by Word Comparison from Pre to Post Assessment

Vocabulary Word	Pre-Intervention Assessment	Post-Intervention Assessment
Academic Words	15/60	46/60
Summarize	XX	XXXX
Preview		XXXX
Simplify	X	XXXX
Fact		XXXXX
Opinion	XXXX	XXXXXX
Persuade		XXXX
Compare		XXXX
Contrast	X	XXXXX
Inform	XXXX	XXXXX
Demonstrate	XXX	XXXXX
Content Specific Words	7/60	47/60
Plague		XXXXXX
Antibodies	X	XXXXX
Suture		XXXX
Entertain	X	XXXXX
Admire	XXXX	XXXX
Gorge		XXXXX
Practitioner		XXXXX
Controversial		XXXX
Infect	X	XXXX
Fatal		XXXXX

X= 1 student responded correctly

Opinion, inform and admire were the most well known words on the pre-intervention assessment. Four of the six focus students had knowledge of those three words using only their prior knowledge. The words preview, fact, persuade, compare, plague, suture, gorge, practitioner, controversial, and fatal were words that no focus students were able to demonstrate knowledge of the meaning on pre-intervention assessment. On the post-intervention assessment, every word was able to be known by at least four of the 6 focus students. Two words, plague and opinion, were known by all focus students.

There were two interesting occurrences where focus students seemed to lose their understanding of a word. On the pre-intervention assessment, Bernardo showed an understanding of the word admire. However, on the post-intervention assessment, he was not able to show that same understanding. The

sentence stem for the word admire was, "If you admire someone, you _____ them." On the pre-intervention assessment, Bernardo filled in the blank with "look up to them." On the post-intervention assessment he responded with, "know them."

A similar occurrence happened with focus student Gina. On the pre-intervention assessment, she correctly answered a question about the word infect and answered incorrectly on the post-intervention assessment. When asked what the word infect means, Gina responded "to spread and give germs." On the post-intervention assessment, for the same question, Gina responded, "an infection." I briefly asked Gina and Bernardo what happened with these two questions. They unfortunately did not know the reason why they were able to answer correctly before and incorrectly after.

The difference between knowledge of general academic words compared to the knowledge of content specific words was a one word difference on the post-intervention assessment. On the pre-intervention assessment, focus students answered 7 of 60 content specific words and 15 of 60 general academic words correctly. The post-intervention results show that focus students answered 47 of 60 content specific words and 46 of 60 general academic words. There was very little difference between the two types of words on the post-intervention assessment.

The post assessment indicated growth in their abilities to use the words and create their own sentences using the words correctly. Table 14 and Table 15 show a comparison of pre and post assessment results based on question prompt.

Table 14
Focus Students' Scores Based on Question Prompt on Baseline Vocabulary Assessment

Student	Meaning of Words		Given Sentence Stem		"Show-me-you-know" Sentence	
Words Used	Summarize, fact, entertain, inform, demonstrate, practitioner, infect		Simplify, antibodies, persuade, admire, preview, compare, fatal, opinion, contrast		Plague, suture, gorge, controversial	
	Raw Score	% Correct	Raw Score	% Correct	Raw Score	% Correct
Gina	2/7	29	2/9	22	0/4	0
Maryanne	3/7	43	2/9	22	0/4	0
Sandy	3/7	43	3/9	33	0/4	0
Alejandro*	1/7	14	0/9	0	0/4	0
Romeo*	2/7	29	1/9	11	0/4	0
Bernardo*	1/7	14	2/9	22	0/4	0
Mean	2/7	29	1.67/9	19	0/4	0

* EL students

Table 15
Focus Students' Scores Based on Question Prompt on Outcome Vocabulary Assessment

Student	Meaning of Words		Given Sentence Stem		"Show-me-you-know" Sentence	
	Raw Score	% Correct	Raw Score	% Correct	Raw Score	% Correct
Gina	5/7	71	8/9	89	3/4	75
Maryanne	6/7	86	7/9	78	3/4	75
Sandy	7/7	100	8/9	89	4/4	100
Alejandro*	3/7	43	2/9	22	1/4	25
Romeo*	6/7	86	9/9	100	4/4	100
Bernardo*	7/7	100	6/9	67	4/4	100
Mean	5.7/7	81	6.67/9	73	3.16/4	79

* EL students

Growth in the focus students' abilities to use and create their own sentences with the vocabulary words is obvious. In creating their own sentences, every focus student was able to create at least 1 sentence using the word correctly. The most significant changes came in those focus students who were able to use the 4 vocabulary words in sentences of their own creation. Romeo, Bernardo and Sandy were able to go from not being able to use any of them in their own sentences to using 100% of them correctly. One of Bernardo's "Show-me-you-know" sentences was, "There was a plague in the town that was killing

people.” The content specific word, plague, was used in a sentence of his own creation and showed that he had an understanding of what a plague is. Romeo also showed huge growth in his ability to finish the sentence when given a sentence stem. For the sentence stem, “If you admire someone, you _____.” Romeo finished the sentence with, “look up to them.” He was able to complete the sentence and show an understanding of the word. He grew from 11% correct to 100% correct on questions with sentence stems. Alejandro, the lowest performing EL, showed growth, but did not demonstrate a clear understanding of the words. I spoke with him about this and it is his lack of knowledge of the English language that poses some challenges. He has a very difficult time putting his thoughts into English words. I spoke with him in my broken Spanish to try to get a better understanding of what he did know about the vocabulary words. We went through the test together and I allowed him to respond orally to me in Spanish about what the words meant. Due to my limited Spanish, I was looking for him to tell me what the words meant, not use them correctly in a sentence in Spanish. I did not feel that my Spanish is to the level of being able to determine a correct sentence. When asked about the meaning and being allowed to respond in Spanish, Alejandro was able to give the correct meaning for 11 out of the 20 words. Though this is still not the level of understanding that I had hoped for, it does show me that it was his limited English that was an obstacle to overcome and hid some of his growth.

Conclusions

In determining the effect of the intervention on students’ abilities to use and understand targeted academic and content specific vocabulary words in oral

and written language, the results showed that the majority of focus students showed improvement. Using games that required students to verbalize and write the correct usage of targeted words helped students understand and use the words on the assessment. Focus students showed an overall growth with improvement from pre- to post-intervention assessment with a mean score improving from 18% to 78%. Student engagement was high during the games which influenced their understanding. Observations showed that all focus students were on task and actively engaged during each game, no matter how difficult. Since the students were on task, they were able to better understand and use the words. They were using all of the opportunities given to them to practice and improve their knowledge of the words.

Using competition based games motivated students to participate and enjoy learning the vocabulary. Student perceptions from the survey and interview show the change in attitude toward enjoying learning and confidence level in learning new vocabulary. With regards to finding vocabulary fun to learn, the median score from the surveys changed from agree to strongly agree after the intervention. Focus students also expressed through their interviews that they felt much more confident in learning new words because they learned new strategies and approaches to learning. The use of games also led students to understand the words and apply the words to non academic settings. The parent survey results suggested that some students were using the targeted words at home in conversation.

Competition based games and the interactions involved in the games supported learning of academic and content specific vocabulary words. According to Krashen (1981), attitudinal factors relate to second language

acquisition. The attitudinal factors encourage intake, by creating safe, comfortable environments in which students are open to learn. Students are encouraged to communicate in the target language and obtain the necessary information. Attitudinal factors also encourage and enable students to utilize the language that is heard (Krashen, 1981). The interactive games and communication between students encouraged positive attitudinal factors, thus opening the students' minds for learning.

For focus student Alejandro, with limited English abilities, improvement was not expressed to its fullest extent. With English being limited, students may not be able to fully express their knowledge in writing. This was found to be true with focus student, Alejandro. He had knowledge of the words but was unable to express it through the written assessment. If this is true for Alejandro, it makes me think about the other 17 English Language Learners that may have a more complete understanding of the material than they are able to express on the assessment. An oral assessment might be a more accurate, though not necessarily plausible, form for determining their understanding.

Implications for Future Teaching

One thing I would like to see in the future is the effect of learning new vocabulary on comprehension abilities. Especially for the ELL students, for which vocabulary and comprehension were both difficult, it would be encouraging to see growth in comprehension based on work in vocabulary. Another consideration for the future relates back to Alejandro's lack of written language. It showed that maybe written assessment aren't the most accurate form of assessment, particularly for ELLs. Trying to accurately determine ELLs'

knowledge and understanding might require a different form of assessment, such as an oral assessment. In my class, the difficulties would be that I have 18 ELLs. Trying to give 18 oral assessments would be difficult to do with time constraints. Another consideration relating to time constraints would be trying to play the vocabulary games on a regular basis. There are so many requirements for elementary school teachers as far as specific time being devoted to specific subjects. Finding the time to regularly play these games would be difficult. However, picking one game a week to play seems to be a way to continue to incorporate the enjoyment and participation during vocabulary and deal with time constraints.

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Appendix A

Sample Survey Completed by Focus Student-Romeo

Survey

Circle your feelings toward each statement using this scale

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree			
1	2	3	4	5			
1. I like to read.			①	2	3	4	5
2. Learning new vocabulary words is fun.			1	②	3	4	5
3. I am a good reader.			①	2	3	4	5
4. I would like to become a better reader.			①	2	3	4	5
5. I am willing to work hard to become a better reader.			①	2	3	4	5
6. Academic language is hard for me to understand.			1	2	3	④	5
7. I would like to learn more vocabulary.			1	②	3	4	5
8. I am a good writer.			1	2	③	4	5
9. I am willing to spend more time on vocabulary in order to understand it better.			①	2	3	4	5
10. I would like help to become a better student.			①	2	3	4	5
11. Writing is fun.			1	②	3	4	5
12. Language Arts is my favorite subject.			1	2	③	4	5

Appendix B
Vocabulary Graphic Organizer of Focus Student-Sandy

Escape

2

Vocabulary Words

Word	Definition	Sentence	Picture
Racket 4	noise indicating conflict or.	When the chickens are on the perch my dog chills the egg racket.	
Commotion 3	noisy disturbance.	The barnyard at night has a lot of commotion.	
Captivity 3	being held and confined.	the chickens are in captivity.	
Appetizing 4	Arousing the desire for food.	When the smell of almonds hit my face, it was appetizing.	
Reconsider 4	Think about again.	You might want to reconsider your answer.	

Appendix C
Pre and Post Intervention Vocabulary Assessment

<p>1. Write a show-me-you-know sentence using the word <u>plague</u>.</p>	<p>2. The word <u>summarize</u> means:</p>	<p>Name _____</p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>Score _____</p>
<p>3. If you are going to <u>simplify</u> a problem, you are going to _____.</p>	<p>4. A <u>fact</u> is something that _____.</p>	<p>5. Your body makes <u>antibodies</u> to _____.</p>

<p>1. Write a show-me-you-know sentence using the word <u>suture</u>.</p>	<p>2. The word <u>entertain</u> means:</p>	<p>Name _____</p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>Score _____</p>
<p>3. If you are going to <u>persuade</u> someone, you are going to _____.</p>	<p>4. Please <u>inform</u> me of what is occurring. Inform means to:</p>	<p>5. If you <u>admire</u> someone, you _____ them.</p>

<p>1. Write a show-me-you-know sentence using the word <u>gorge</u>.</p>	<p>2. The word <u>demonstrate</u> means:</p>	<p>Name _____</p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>Score _____</p>
<p>3. If you are going to <u>preview</u> a test, you are going to _____.</p>	<p>4. A <u>practitioner</u> is someone who _____.</p>	<p>5. When I look for similarities between 2 objects, I am demonstrating how to _____.</p>

<p>1. Write a show-me-you-know sentence using the word <u>controversial</u>.</p>	<p>2. The word <u>infect</u> means:</p>	<p>Name _____</p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>Score _____</p>
<p>3. The doctor said my disease was <u>fatal</u>. This meant it was _____.</p>	<p>4. An <u>opinion</u> is something that _____.</p>	<p>5. To <u>contrast</u> is to _____.</p>