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Effects of specific reading strategies to assist students with reading comprehension

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The Effects of Specific Reading Strategies to Assist Students with Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

The instruction and implementation of reading strategies in the classroom has been a hot topic in education. The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of using specific reading strategies to assist students with reading comprehension by providing explicit instruction for the specific reading strategies. The length of this study lasted for eight weeks and was focused on expository texts the students read at the beginning of each class. Thirty-seven students participated in this study, but all of my students received the same instruction. Students were assessed using a pre and post assessment to determine if the specific reading strategies provided improvement in their reading comprehension. The results showed improvement, but the improvement was not statistically significant based on the result of the *t*-test, which did not indicate significance based on a *p* value of 0.05.

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Chapter One

Introduction

I have been an English teacher for the past seven years, and I have noticed that students do not always necessarily know what their minds do when they read. The students do not have the awareness that they utilize specific reading strategies while they are reading, and they are also not aware that they utilize specific reading strategies when they become challenged while they are reading. Similarly, I talked about this issue with other teachers in all subject areas and many different grade levels, and many other teachers had similar concerns about student reading and comprehension. It appears that students think they know what they do when they read, but they cannot actually verbalize what they do, meaning that they do not have a genuine idea of the skills and tools they use to gather meaning. Therefore, it is important for teachers to create common vocabulary for the students to use when they are discussing or referring to the specific reading strategies they use before, during, and after they read a text. The question that will focus my research is: what are the effects of using specific reading strategies on the reading comprehension of seventh-grade students?

Harvey and Goudvis (2007) created common terminology for the specific reading strategies that are used when a reader encounters a text. The specific reading strategies they developed and modified were: monitoring comprehension, questioning, making connections, inferring, determining importance, visualizing, and synthesizing (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). Another practitioner has also adopted the reading strategies, Buehl (2009) and Harvey and Daniels (2009), have extended the original practice of Harvey & Goudvis (2007) to make the instruction of these specific reading strategies more

effective. Buehl (2009), Fielding & Pearson (1994), Harvey & Daniels (2009), and Wilson (2011) all understood the efficacy of instructing students with the use of each specific reading strategy. Researchers and practitioners have identified the importance of the teacher using explicit language so the students know exactly what is expected of them (Buehl, 2009; Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Wilson, 2011). This way, the teacher is certain to be providing his or her students with the most current and effective language to provide for his or her students. Furthermore, Fielding & Pearson (1994) included the fact that teachers need to teach students specific reading strategies that are authentic. Furthermore, the reading strategies are the strategies that fluent readers naturally use when they comprehend a text successfully. The teacher needs to model the process in which he or she would actually use to read so the students can observe an advanced reader using the reading strategies. Additionally, the teacher should also model these strategies while using authentic texts that the students would actually encounter in their personal and educational lives (Wilson, 2011). Similarly, the teacher must also teach the students when and how to use the strategies when they are naturally reading (Wilson, 2011). In addition to the use of specific reading strategies, Hilde (2004) conducted a study using specific reading strategies that found that although teaching specific reading strategies to students is important and it has positive effects on the students' learning, it is also imperative that students receive prolonged instruction and practice with the specific reading strategies. Without the prolonged instruction and practice, the students tended to forget the strategies and did not realize as efficiently where and when to use them (Hilde, 2004). Although I only have influence on the instruction that occurs in my classroom, hopefully the results of this study might enlighten the administrators in my district and

motivate them to adopt the specific terminology and put the instruction and practice of the specific reading strategies in the curriculum at all grade levels. Teachers may do it in their own classrooms with their own terminology, but I am looking to create common language so the students will always be clear about what they are being asked to accomplish with their reading.

I am hoping to bring awareness to the students so they will know which strategies they use to comprehend a text and also which strategies they may use to overcome comprehension challenges when they do not completely understand what they are reading. Throughout the study, the students used four different reading strategies, monitoring comprehension, asking questions, making connections, and determining importance (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007).

I focused on the monitoring comprehension strategy because it is important for readers to be able to listen to and to understand their inner conversation (Buehl, 2009; Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Wilson, 2011). Advanced readers understand that they have an actual conversation going on in their heads while they read a text. The monitoring comprehension reading strategy allows for the reader to listen to the conversation to gain a better understanding and to create meaning of the text they are reading (Buehl, 2009; Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Harvey & Goudivis, 2007; Wilson; 2011). Buehl (2009) and Wilson (2004) refer to this inner conversation as the metacognitive conversation and it is described as the conversation a reader has in his or her head that track what he or she is thinking, how he or she is thinking, and why he or she is thinking (Buehl, 2009). Other researchers also use the monitoring comprehension reading strategy because the strategy forces the reader to interact with what he or she is

thinking about while he or she reads (Caldwell & Leslie, 2009; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). The monitoring comprehension reading strategy is specifically aligned with the Wisconsin State Core Standards. For example, RI.7.5 Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how major sections contribute to the whole and to the development of ideas. Also, RI.7.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

The questioning strategy is used when the reader asks questions about the author, the meaning of the text, the context, or to expand the reader's thinking (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). Also, the more a reader knows about a subject, the more inquisitive the reader should become, resulting in higher level questioning skills within a text (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). Similarly, the readers who create their own questions while they are reading are the readers who are personally interacting with the text and are using questions to make sense of what they are reading (Buehl, 2009). There should be instructional time devoted to teach students how to ask good questions that deserve real, solid answers, that way, their actual reading time will be more beneficial to good, meaningful questions (Buehl, 2009; Caldwell & Leslie, 2009 Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Harvey & Daniels, 2009; Marzano, et al., 2001). The questioning reading strategy is specifically aligned with the Wisconsin State Core Standards. For example, RI.7.8 Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims. Also, RI.7.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguished his or her position from that of others.

The making connections reading strategy is important for readers because they develop a personal connection with what they are reading, which creates more interest and investment in the text for the reader (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). There are three kinds of connections a reader can make while interacting with a text: text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world. Text-to-text connections occur when the reader can make a comparison or recognize a similarity with the text they are reading to a text they have read in the past. Text-to-self connections happen when the reader can personally relate to what he or she is reading, whether it is through an experience, a memory, or a personal doctrine to which the reader adheres. Text-to-world connections take place when the reader can connect what he or she is reading to real world, societal, and historical events and understanding (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). When the reader makes connections with the text he or she is reading, whether it be text to text, self, or world, it helps the reader understand the new information the text is providing, and establishes interest, motivation, and can create a stronger purpose for the reader (Buehl, 2009; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Harvey & Daniels, 2009). The making connections reading strategy is specifically aligned to the Wisconsin State Core Standards. For example, RI.7.7 Compare and contrast a text to an audio, video, or multimedia version of the text, analyzing each medium's portrayal of the subject (e.g., how the delivery of a speech affects the impact of words). Also, RI.7.9 Analyze how two or more authors writing about the same topic share their presentations of key information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of facts.

Finally, the determining importance reading strategy is important because the reader is reading to learn, to understand, and to remember the information provided in the

text (Harvey & Daniels, 2007). Also, the reader will gain important information from the text and the visual features from the text. It also encourages the reader to sort through the information he or she read to figure out what is the important information or main idea(s) and what are the supporting details. Furthermore, the determining importance reading strategy forces readers to make a distinction between what they think is important and also what the author wants the reader to think what the most important ideas are. Finally, this reading strategy encourages readers to be able to support their decision with specific examples from their reading, making them interact with the text more than once (Buehl, 2009; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Harvey & Daniels, 2007; Marzano, et al., 2001; Schudt-Caldwell & Leslie, 2009). The determining importance reading strategy is specifically aligned with the Wisconsin State Core Standards. For example, RI.7.2 Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text. Also, RI.7.3 Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

Student Demographics

The students that participated in this specific reading strategy study attended middle school in a Suburban Milwaukee public school. There were thirty-seven total students who participated in the study, seventeen males, and twenty females. Of those thirty-seven students, twenty-nine of them were Caucasian, four were African American, four were Hispanic, and of the four Hispanic students, two of them were English Language Learners, with Spanish being their first language. All of the students were taken from my three Integrated Language Arts section in the seventh grade.

Timeline

The timeline of this study was conducted during the second part of the third and the first part of the fourth quarters of the regular school year. The study started on February 13, 2012 with a QRI-5 passage and ended on April 20, 2012 with the final QRI-5 passage. The students read and interacted with the articles as their daily warm-up, thus adding to their standard curriculum. The study was conducted in my classroom at the middle school where I teach.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research focusing on using specific reading strategies to help with adolescent reading comprehension is clear. It is necessary for students to be taught specific reading strategies and have that instruction maintained throughout their educational career to make sure the readers are consistently using the specific reading strategies while they are encountering more difficult and complicated texts. Furthermore, it is imperative that students be taught the specific reading strategies at an early age to ensure mastery of those skills. Therefore, students will benefit from the implementation of specific reading strategies because they will become more aware of the reading strategies they use when they are reading, and the reading strategies they use when they come to a challenge in their reading. This is an important aspect of a reading curriculum because it is not only preparing these students for high school, but it is also preparing them for real-life reading. Further research will be addressed in Chapter Two that supports the introductory research found in Chapter One. The studies will be summarizes and analyzed more thoroughly to reinforce the need for educators to teach students to use

specific reading strategies while they are reading, and to maintain the reading strategy lessons throughout a reader's educational career.

Chapter Two

A Review of the Literature

Researchers have long attempted to identify the most effective way to teach reading comprehension (Chambers-Cantrell, Almasi, Carter, Rintamaa, & Madden, 2010; Chambers-Cantrell & Carter, 2009; Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, & Afflerbach, 1995; Hilde, 2004; Karasakaloglu, 2010; Li, 2010; Liang, Watkins, Graves, & Hosp, 2010; McCallum, Krohn, Skinner, Hilton-Prillhart, Hopkins, Waller, & Polite, 2010; Pitcher, Martinez, Dicembre, & McCormick, 2010; Prado, & Plourde, 2011; Quiocho, 1997; Serafini, 2011). Chapter Two discusses a variety of factors related to reading comprehension among adolescent learners. The chapter identifies a variety of subtopics that researchers have used as lenses to examine and determine the effectiveness of various approaches to reading comprehension: understanding adolescent perceptions of literacy, examining reading strategies, and applying interventions to support comprehension. Chapter Two examines the idea that students know when they struggle and because of that they also want strategies to help them improve (Chambers-Cantrell & Carter, 2009; Guthrie et al., 1995; Pitcher et al., 2010). This chapter then demonstrates the importance of teaching explicit reading comprehension strategies and provides evidence of the fact that they need to be taught over an extensive period of time (Chambers-Cantrell et al., 2010; Hilde, 2004; Karasakaloglu, 2010; Li, 2010; Liang et al., 2010; McCallum, et al., 2010; Prado & Plourde, 2011).

Adolescent Perception of Literacy

This section illustrates how students perceive their own reading and literacy abilities. The focus is to observe students' abilities in reading comprehension and

whether or not they are aware of their struggles and deficiencies. Students tend to be painfully aware of their struggles in reading, and they want strategies to help them improve their reading comprehension (Chambers-Cantrell & Carter, 2009; Guthrie et al., 1995; Pitcher et al., 2010). Pitcher et al. (2010) designed an extensive case study in which the researchers interviewed students to determine their reading comprehension knowledge. The researchers investigated three research questions: (1) What types of reading instruction do adolescent students receive? (2) Are the students receiving the instruction they need? and (3) Do parents understand their importance in reading instruction and the role they play in their child's learning? The researchers used an informal reading inventory, a comprehensive reading test, and a reading survey to determine students' instructional reading comprehension level. Researchers also conducted student and parent interviews in order to determine perceptions about the quality of the reading instruction that students received.

Seven adolescent students who attended schools in the Baltimore metropolitan area and who represented diverse ethnic, cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds participated in this multiple case study. One student was homeschooled, but all were in grades six, seven, or eight and experienced reading difficulties in school.

The researchers began the study by identifying seven students who were struggling in their reading program based on their attendance to a university reading clinic. The researchers individually discussed specific interview questions with each of the seven participants in order to better understand what motivated the students, and to assess their word identification levels, their comprehension levels, and their use of reading comprehension strategies. The researchers then interviewed the student's parents

and asked them the same questions. Finally, the researchers analyzed the data from the seven participants and identified recurring themes among the students.

Data revealed that all of the students were below grade level for reading comprehension and none of them received interventions targeting comprehension. Two of the students received phonics instruction, but the intervention was not created for their specific learning needs. For the other five students, there was not any comprehension instruction at because of the instruction they received at their school. The researchers also determined that the students were not exposed to specific reading strategies in their learning, and they experienced the most difficulty when faced with expository texts. This indicated the need for educators to expose students to specific reading strategies and to develop interventions specifically aligned with students' learning needs. The parents understood the problems their children were experiencing, and they expressed frustration with the lack of communication from the teachers from the school. The researchers suggested that schools must provide a reading specialist who could create specific reading interventions tailored to the students' individual needs. Additionally, data led researchers to conclude that teachers must be more communicative with parents so that interventions could be appropriately designed and implemented in order to provide students with the greatest support possible.

As in the study by Pitcher et al. (2010), Chambers-Cantrell and Carter (2009) not only identified students' knowledge of their reading comprehension, but also attempted to identify differences between age groups, gender, and the students' awareness of the reading strategies that they used. Chambers-Cantrell and Carter (2009) focused their correlational study on specific learner characteristics, such as reading ability, gender, and

age, which influenced the use of reading strategies that all readers used regardless of their reading abilities. The researchers wanted to identify: (1) The reading strategies that all readers from different achievement levels used, (2) How gender and age affected the relationship between achievement and reading strategy use, and (3) The extent to which deep and surface-level cognitive processes are used by students of different ages, genders, and reading abilities. The researchers used two different literacy tests as the dependent variables.

The participants of the study consisted of 216 sixth-grade students and 816 ninth-grade students at the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year and 334 sixth-grade students and 754 ninth-grade students in the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year. All together, there were 550 sixth-grade students and 1570 ninth-grade students. The students came from one urban school, four suburban schools, and two rural schools. The schools served students from a range of socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds, with between twenty-six to sixty-nine percent of students receiving free and reduced lunch and between 25 to less than one percent of students hailing from minority groups.

Researchers administered the first of the two literacy tests to identify the extent to which students used reading strategies broken into three different categories: global reading strategies, problem-solving reading strategies, and support reading strategies. The second literacy test assessed the reading strategies that the students used. Both of these tests were administered in September. Based on the students' scores, researchers placed students into one of three categories: low reading achievement, moderate reading achievement, and high reading achievement. The three levels of reading achievement were then correlated with the students' gender and grade level.

The researchers determined that most students reported using problem-solving strategies, such as stopping to think, visualizing, rereading, and adjusting speed. The students reported using global reading strategies, such as previewing and skimming text less often, and they reported using support (functional) strategies, such as note taking and paraphrasing, the least. There was a significant relationship between students' reading achievement and their use of global and problem-solving strategies, meaning that as reading achievement scores improved, so did the use of global and problem solving reading strategies. Additionally, researchers discovered a significant, negative relationship between reading achievement and the use of support reading strategies. This demonstrated that as reading achievement increased, the use of support reading strategies decreased. This indicated that better readers used global and problem-solving reading strategies and that poorer readers tended to utilize supportive reading strategies.

The second goal of the study was to understand the relationship between reading strategy use and gender and age. The study found that girls tended to use all three reading strategies more frequently than boys did. There was no significant difference, however, between sixth and ninth-graders when it came to the global and problem-solving strategies, indicating that it is a strategy that is more helpful for readers younger than sixth grade. However, the researchers did find that sixth graders utilized supportive reading strategies significantly more frequently than ninth-grades, indicating that readers at the ninth-grade level were more independent with their reading strategy usage.

This study identified specific reading strategies that supported good readers. The problem-solving strategies and global strategies were positively correlated with reading achievement, whereas poorer readers tended to use strategies such as underlining

information, taking notes, using reference materials, and reading aloud much more than better readers. Since this study determined that girls more readily used reading strategies than boys, teachers should give boys the tools they will need to be successful in reading. Teachers should focus their attention and explicit instruction on global reading strategies, such as using text structures, making connections, and activating prior knowledge. Although there were no clear differences between younger and older students' use of reading strategies, there was a difference in students' awareness of their reading strategy usage, as the student got older, indicating that their awareness of their reading strategy usage has improved. Therefore, educators should incorporate instruction related to specific reading strategies into their daily lesson plans for students of all ages .

The studies by Chambers-Cantrell and Carter (2009) and Pitcher et al (2010) focused on students' awareness of when they struggled and their knowledge of the reading strategies and how they are used. Guthrie et al (1995) also incorporated a new thread of research by having students recognize that social, cognitive, and instructional practices are all connected to achieve the ultimate goal of reading comprehension and the students' awareness of the strategies they use.

Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, and Afflerbach (1995) conducted a study to determine if there were connections between social, cognitive, and home factors that influence the extent and the amount of reading kids from three different ages read. The study attempted to answer five questions: (1) Are there direct associations between the amount of students' social interactions with reading and how much they read? (2) Are there direct associations between students' use of cognitive strategies and how much they read? (3) How is reading instruction associated with students' social interactions, cognitive

strategies, and how much they read? (4) Are there patterns of association between social interaction, cognitive strategies, instruction, home literacy, and reading activity and the age of the child? (5) Are there patterns between instruction, social interaction, cognitive strategies, home literacy, and reading activity similar for fiction and nonfiction texts? The independent variables of this study were a matrix sampling and large-scale surveys. The dependent variables were a standardized test containing 74 questions on instruction, reading activity, social factors, and cognitive variables and a self-report.

The participants in this study were 926 9, 13, and 17-year-old students. The participants were selected by using a four-stage process. In the first stage, the United States was divided in 94 geographic locations, called primary sampling units (PSU). Second, schools in each PSU were selected based on how many eligible students they had enrolled. Probabilities for high-minority schools were twice those of other schools to ensure a diverse sample. Third, the researchers selected schools from each PSU, and finally the researchers used a systematic selection of students.

The researchers used a standardized test to assess the students using 74 questions on instruction, reading activity, social factors, and cognitive variables. Many of the same questions were used for the 9, 13, and 17 year-old students, allowing for cross-age comparisons. Additionally, two sets of items, attitudinal and cognitive items, were developed to be administered to each student. These were developed using a block schedule design. Each of the items were put into 16-minute blocks, each block containing two minutes of attitude items and 14 minutes of cognitive items. Each student was provided with a booklet containing three subject area blocks, and a block of common background items, for a total testing time of a little under an hour. The booklets were

distributed to make sure that no two students were given the same assessment at the same time. The students would then be provided a reading achievement score, although ten different constructs were included: home literacy, social interactions, teacher-directed instruction, student-centered instruction, study strategies, library reading, general reading activity, news reading, fiction reading, and nonfiction reading.

The results for nine-year-old students confirmed that social interaction with reading was positively associated with reading activity. Students who talk and interact with their peers and parents about reading and writing are more active readers than students who do not. Similarly, the students who reported high levels of reading activities had a large number of study and cognitive strategies; thus encouraging more broad and difficult texts. For 13-year-old students, the results indicated that the students who reported reading more frequently and broadly were more likely to talk and discuss the reading with their friends and family. Avid readers reported talking, asking questions, and sharing information about reading and writing. The results for 17-year-old students were separated into fiction and nonfiction reading activities. The students who read more fiction had a positive association with social interactions, meaning the student was more likely to discuss fiction than nonfiction. Similarly, the students who reported reading less fiction and more nonfiction received more teacher-centered instruction and less student-centered instruction.

At all three ages, students' reports indicated that reading activity was highly associated with their social interactions with friends and family members. In other words highly active readers would discuss what they read with their friends and family. Additionally, it was reported that the students of all three ages who were highly active

readers, were able to utilize reading and cognitive strategies while they were reading. These readers reported taking notes, making outlines, rereading, questioning themselves, and addressing issues with their friends and family. Therefore, instruction in comprehension not only increases the amount of reading, but it also enabled students to be aware of the reading strategies they used to help them comprehend texts.

The studies conducted by Chambers-Cantrell and Carter (2009), Guthrie et al., (1995) and Pitcher et at., (2010) demonstrated the effects of students' awareness of their reading comprehension and the differences of reading comprehension between age groups, girls and boys. Additionally, the study also demonstrated the extent to which the students know about their reading strategy use. In addition, this section illustrated the connections between social, cognitive, and instructional practices that assist a reader in being successful.

Reading Strategies

This section focuses on specific reading strategies that teachers can use to improve their students' reading comprehension through the use of specific reading strategies. Chambers-Cantrell et al. (2010) explored the effects of specific reading strategy instruction on the reading comprehension of struggling adolescent readers. The researchers aspired to determine the effects of an intervention, the Learning Strategies Curriculum (LSC) (Chambers-Cantrell et al., 2010), designed to help struggling adolescent readers learn and use comprehension strategies. The researchers also wanted to determine if there was a difference in the effectiveness of the intervention based on the age of students who participated. The LSC used specific cognitive strategies focused on improving students' abilities to process word identification, visual imagery, self-

questioning, vocabulary, paraphrasing, and sentence writing. The researchers separated the strategies into three separate strategy categories: cognitive strategies (paraphrasing, questioning), behavioral strategies (using a dictionary to look up the meaning of a word), and metacognitive strategies (comprehension monitoring, rereading). The cognitive and behavioral strategies focused on the progress the students made toward their goal, and the metacognitive strategies focused on assessing the progress that was made toward the goal. The independent variable for the study was the treatment group's participation in LSC. The dependent variables for the study were a standardized test, a reading strategies inventory, pre and posttests, classroom observations, and teacher interviews. The researchers predicted that both sixth and ninth-grade students would benefit from the LSC, but there would be a difference in how they benefitted, specifically that the sixth-grade students would observe greater advantages and benefits.

Twenty-five teachers, twelve middle school teachers and fourteen high school teachers participated in this study. All of the intervention teachers were Caucasian, and there was one male teacher. Researchers collected data from over 862 students in about 23 rural schools participating in a national initiative to support struggling adolescent readers. The majority of the students were Caucasian, and many lived in poverty. Students in each grade were equally divided between treatment and control groups.

The LSC had two main functions: (1) A whole-school model that involved professional development that required all teachers training in content area literacy and (2) A targeted intervention (LSC) for sixth and ninth-grade students who scored below two grade level equivalents on a standardized test. All students participated in the whole-school model, while only a randomly selected group of students received the LSC. The

LSC was a supplementary curriculum used in the reading/language arts classroom. The students received the regular language arts curriculum and then an additional 50 minutes of the LSC. The intervention teachers received professional development for the six LSC strategies (word identification, visual imagery, self-questioning, a vocabulary strategy, sentence writing, and paraphrasing) during summer in-services and additional training sessions during the summer and the school year. Teachers learned each strategy and received a manual including detailed instructions for how to teach and assess the strategy.

Before each strategy was taught, the students in the treatment group were provided with a pretest that required them to read from an age-appropriate text and use the targeted strategy. The teacher provided feedback for the student, including a justification for and advantages to using the targeted strategy. Next, the teacher explained and demonstrated the strategy for her students. A number of the students also made study flashcards and participated in guided practice activities. Finally, the teacher assessed the students' knowledge of the strategy by using a posttest, which involved reading a different age-appropriate text while using the focal strategy. The final assessment also included an assessment that brought awareness to the reading strategies used by the students. The teacher would then move on to the next strategy, but she would also continually review the previous strategies taught. Classroom observations were used at least twice during the course of the LSC to ensure teacher fidelity to the curriculum and the extent to which the curriculum was being taught. Teacher interviews that were scheduled after the observation provided additional data about the goals of the lesson observed, specific details of the lesson plan from the teacher's perspective, and allowed the teachers to reflect on the lesson.

As previously stated, the purpose of the study was to determine the effects of the LSC on adolescents' reading comprehension. Once again, the researchers thought students in both grades would observe benefits, but they predicted that the benefits would be different for sixth and ninth graders. Overall, the sixth-grade students in the treatment group performed significantly better on the posttests than the sixth-grade students in the control group. Socioeconomic status did appear to influence the effectiveness of the LSC intervention model on sixth grade students' reading comprehension abilities, as measured by the researcher-selected assessments. This indicated that schools serving greater percentages of students living in poverty tended to score lower on the assessments than students from wealthier schools. Another result determined that students in special education tended to score lower on the assessments than students in regular education.

The results for the ninth-grade students were not as conclusive as those of the sixth-grade students. The only factor that influenced the test results of ninth grade students was the socioeconomic status, which mirrored the sixth-grade results. Students who attended schools with serving higher percentages of students in poverty tended to score lower on the tests than students from wealthier schools despite their participation in the LSC. Otherwise, there were no significant differences between the treatment and the control groups for ninth-grade students. Therefore, the sixth grade students assigned to the LSC treatment group benefitted from participation in the study, but there was not a significant difference between the treatment and control groups at the ninth-grade level. This supported the researchers' hypothesis that different reading interventions would work differently for different aged students. The LSC thus proved to be an appropriate intervention for younger adolescent, struggling readers.

While Chambers-Cantrell et al. (2010) suggested that specific strategy-based instruction benefitted younger readers; Hilde (2004) also attempted to identify an effective approach to reading strategy instruction with younger students. The researcher wanted to identify the effectiveness of different ways to teach reading comprehension. The researcher wanted to specifically examine the best way to teach reading comprehension using specific reading strategies. The researcher divided the students into groups in order to determine the effectiveness of four different instructional techniques: (a) Teacher-led whole-class activities, (b) Same-age peer tutoring, (c) Cross-age peer tutoring, and (d) Traditional reading instruction with no focus on specific reading strategies (control group). The independent variable was the teaching technique used in each of the four different groups. The dependent variables were pre and posttest results from a standardized reading test and a reading comprehension assessment, both of which were the traditional tests for primary-school students and which were used to identify students' reading comprehension abilities. The researcher stated three hypotheses. First, exposing fifth-grade students to specific reading strategies would positively impact students' reading comprehension achievement. The second hypothesis was that students in the peer tutoring groups (same-age and cross-age) would produce better results than students assigned to the control group and the teacher-led group conditions. The final hypothesis was that students in the cross-age peer-tutoring group would have better results than the students in the same-age peer-tutoring group.

Twenty-two fifth grade teachers and their students from nineteen different Belgian schools participated in the study. The 454 student participants represented equal numbers of males and females students, all of whom spoke Dutch as their first language.

The researchers selected teachers and randomly assigned them to one of the four instructional conditions. Each instructional group had an approximately equal numbers of students.

This study was implemented in 19 different schools, and the students were randomly assigned to one of the following categories: (1) Explicit reading strategies instruction and practicing the topics during teacher-led whole-class activities (STRAT), (2) Explicit reading strategies instruction and practicing the topics in class-wide reciprocal same-age pairs (STRAT+SA), (3) Explicit reading strategies instruction and practicing the topics in class-wide reciprocal cross-age pairs (STRAT+CA), and (4) Traditional reading comprehension without explicit instruction or peer tutoring.

The teachers were provided with preparatory instructions and additional support to ensure the fidelity of their teaching. All the teachers were provided with a manual including much of the information they needed to teach: description and goals of the teaching strategy, lesson plans, materials, instructional techniques, and supplementary student materials. The teachers were neither required nor expected to produce their own material for the lesson plans and received extensive professional development and technical support over the course of the study.

The researcher identified six reading strategies on which the teachers needed to focus all of which could be used before, during and after reading: activating background knowledge and imagining what the text could be about, predictive reading and verifying the predictions made, distinguishing main ideas from side issues, monitoring and regulating the comprehension by tracing the ideas expressed in difficult and not understood sentences and passages, and classifying text genres and adjusting behavior to

accommodate it. The students received instruction in their prospective groups for the entire school year. The teachers in the peer tutoring groups also provided specific instructions to the students about what constitutes a good peer tutor. They practiced with verbal and visual explanations, modeling, role-playing, and discussions with adequate teacher feedback on performance. The teachers selected the peer tutoring groups based on students' ability levels. The same-age and cross-age tutoring groups remained consistent over the duration of the study. In the STRAT group, the teacher introduced the reading strategy and provided the class with texts and activities for practice with the targeted strategy. The teachers in the control group did not know they were part of the control group; instead, they were informed that the focus of the study was to determine the effects of reading comprehension. Teachers gave little to no attention to providing explicit instruction to specific reading strategies in the control group. The students were administered a pretest at the beginning of the school year, before the instruction, and a posttest was administered at the end of the year to assess the students' ability to use the reading strategy. Then a retention test was administered in December in their sixth-grade year to determine retention of the skills.

The results of the study reinforced the importance of teaching specific reading strategies to students to support their reading comprehension. The two groups that exhibited significant differences in their reading comprehension abilities as compared with the control group were the STRAT+CA and STRAT groups. Both groups received instruction in specific reading strategies, and the STRAT+CA group also benefitted from additional peer tutoring opportunities with cross-aged students. The same-age peer-tutoring group did not, however, exhibit a significant difference when compared to the

control group, which indicated that this technique may not be useful, a finding which contradicted previous research cited by the author. Therefore, the study did not fully confirm any of the researcher's hypotheses. The first hypothesis was mostly accurate in that two of the three treatment groups demonstrated significant improvements in the test scores compared to the control group. This indicated that by teaching specific reading strategies, the students would be more able to independently use them when encountering a challenging text. The second hypothesis was that students in the peer tutoring groups (same-age and cross-age) would produce better results than the control group and the teacher-led group. This hypothesis was partially confirmed. The cross-age group demonstrated significant improvement over the control group, but the same-age group did not. This may indicate that older students feel more motivated to tutor younger students because their self-worth and confidence increase, and they take more of the authoritative role with the younger student. The final hypothesis, and the only one that was fully confirmed, was that students in the cross-age peer tutoring group would have better results than the students in the same-age peer tutoring group. Furthermore, there was no significant improvement between the posttest score and the retention scores taken during the sixth-grade year. This demonstrated the need for consistent, prolonged exposure to the specific reading strategy instruction and use in order to promote retention. This study thus illustrated the importance of teaching students specific reading strategies to promote reading comprehension. While there were some inconsistencies as to which instructional context represented the most effective approach, it was apparent that consistent, prolonged exposure to and practice with these strategies was the only way to ensure long-term retention.

While Hilde (2004) examined approaches to reading strategy instruction for fifth grade students, Liang et al. (2010) demonstrated the positive effects of strategy instruction on the comprehension of slightly older readers. Aimonette, Watkins, Graves, and Hosp (2010) conducted a survey to determine the most effective post-reading questioning strategy to aid student understanding of texts. The researchers created a new type of questioning format, the story map, which consisted of a set of questions designed specifically to help students understand the main events of what they have read. This questioning technique should not be confused with the graphic organizer called the story map designed to identify the elements of a story's plot. The researchers designed the story map questioning strategy to do three things: (1) Improve students' thoughts of a story, (2) Improve students' comprehension of a story, and (3) Help students understand the workings of a story so they can discuss interpretive, analytical, and creative questions about the story (Aimonette et al., 2010). The order of the questions attempted to provide recall information and then to take the reader to a deeper level of understanding for higher-level thinking. The researchers wanted to determine if their story map questioning strategy provided more comprehension for the reader. The independent variable for the study was the story map questioning technique. The dependent variables were students' results on multiple-choice tests related to short stories that were read by the student and a student attitude survey.

The participants of this study consisted of 87 students from mixed-ability language arts classrooms in a large urban city. Sixteen percent of the participants were minorities, and eighteen percent of the participants were eligible for free or reduced lunch. The students were placed with three different teachers; one teacher had one year of

teaching experience, and the other two teachers each had six years of teaching experience. Researchers divided students into three groups of approximately equal numbers. The treatment group engaged in the experimental story map questioning technique, the second group completed the post-reading questions provided by the publisher of each story, and the third group received no post-reading treatment.

The researchers selected three short suspense stories that were of similar length and level of difficulty, according to a common readability test. The researchers analyzed the types of questions used at the end of each story in the anthologies and found a general pattern of questions asked: one response question, three to four recall questions, two inferential questions, and two questions focusing on literary elements. The researchers formatted their story map questions to follow the same general pattern so there would not be obvious differences in the questions. The researchers addressed one story each week, but used the same lesson plan schedule. On the first day of the first week, the students read the first focal text individually without any classroom discussion. On the second day, the lesson plan varied according the group in which the students were placed. Students in group one did not participate in any type of post-reading instruction, while students in group two completed the anthology questions, and students in group three completed the story map questioning technique. On the third day, all of the students completed the multiple-choice comprehension test and the student attitude assessment related to the type of treatment they received. Students repeated this lesson plan cycle during the second and third weeks of the study using the other two focal texts.

Although the researchers expected that students who completed the story map questioning technique would receive the highest scores on the multiple-choice

comprehension assessment, in actuality, there was no significant difference in the results between the scores of the story map treatment group and the scores of students who answered the anthology questions. There was a significant difference between the scores of the two treatment groups and the control group that did not have any post-reading instruction. These results indicated that both the story map questioning technique and responding to anthology questions effectively aided in student comprehension, but the story map was more effective. The difference between the two strategies that led to these increased comprehension scores was revealed upon examination of the results from the attitude survey. Students indicated that they liked the story map questions slightly more than they liked responding to the anthology questions, but there was no significant difference between the two questioning methods.

Additionally, Li (2010) also attempted to determine how students respond to reading strategies, but she also wanted to determine if there was a difference between males and females in regards to reading comprehension. Li (2010) conducted a survey to answer the following questions about reading comprehension: (1) What type and frequency of reading strategies do the students use in their reading processes? (2) Are there any significant differences by gender in the use of reading strategies? (3) Is there any relationship between strategy use and students' English proficiency?

The students who participated in this study were from four third grade classrooms chosen randomly from Ji'an County Senior Middle School in JiangXi Province in China. A total of 180 students who had taken the English language for almost six years participated in the study. Of those 180 students, 137 of them were males, and 43 of them were females. The participants were then divided into three groups according to their

scores on a standardized test. The top 30% were regarded as high-proficiency students, the low 30% were regarded as low-proficiency students, and the middle 40% were regarded as average-proficiency students.

The researcher first provided the students with a questionnaire made up of two parts. The first part asked the students' age, gender, academic major, etc. to obtain some background information. The second part was a common reading strategy inventory test designed to measure adolescent and adult students' awareness and use of reading strategies while reading academic material.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of three different parts: global reading strategies, problem-solving strategies, and support reading strategies. The global reading strategies contained thirteen items and represented a set of reading strategies oriented toward global analysis of a text. Some examples of these reading strategies included: evaluating what to read and ignore, noting text characteristics, and predicting what the material will be about. These strategies can be general, intentional reading strategies geared at the preparation for reading.

The problem solving strategies section contained eight items that appeared to be related to strategies that students use for solving problems when a text becomes difficult to read. Some examples of these strategies included: re-reading for better understanding, going back when concentration is lost, and pausing and thinking about what is being read. These strategies provide readers with a plan that permits them to navigate through a text with skill and purpose. These strategies are more centered to problem solving or repair strategies a student can use when the text he or she is reading become too challenging for the reader.

The support reading strategies contained nine items and involved the use of outside reference materials, taking notes, underlining, or circling information and using other practical strategies that could be described as functional or support reading strategies.

Therefore, Li (2010) determined that in regards to her first research question, what type and frequency of reading strategies do the students use in their reading success? she found that students tended to use the problem solving strategies the most, followed by the global reading strategies, and finally, support reading strategies were used the least.

In regards to her second research question, are there any significant differences by gender in the use of reading strategies? she found that females used more reading strategies than males did during the study. The study also demonstrated that females reported higher reading strategies usage in all the different categories. This could be because females are generally seen to focus more on detail and being careful, whereas makes tend to be more aggressive and ambitious, thus, resulting in more quick, careless behavior.

In regards to Li's third research question, is there any relationship between reading strategy use and students' English proficiency? she found that there did appear to be a strong relationship between reading strategies used by the reader and metacognitive awareness, and reading proficiency. Therefore, it was found that successful readers appear to use more reading strategies than less successful readers and that they use them more frequently than less successful readers.

In addition to Li (2010) other researchers attempted to determine if gender made a difference in reading comprehension. Researchers Prado and Plourde (2011) conducted a survey to see if there was a significant difference between how students perform on reading pre and posttests after they had received explicit instruction on reading strategies. The researchers set out to answer two research questions: (1) Will there be a difference on students' pre and posttest scores on a National standardized test after teaching the following reading strategies: (a) questioning to clarify meaning; (b) using background knowledge to make connections; (c) making inferences and drawing conclusions; (d) visualizing or creating mental images from what is being read; (e) determining the most important ideas or themes; (f) synthesizing information; and (g) using fix-up strategies such as skipping ahead, rereading, using a dictionary, and reading a passage aloud, and (2) Will there be a significant difference in pre and posttest scores between boys and girls in all the previously stated areas.

The students who participated in this study were fourth-grade students from an elementary school located in eastern Washington. A total of fifty-seven students participated, with thirty-two of them were males, and twenty-five of them were females. Of the thirty-two males, nineteen were Hispanic, twelve were Caucasian, and one was African American. Of the twenty-five females, eight were Hispanic, sixteen were Caucasian, and one was African American.

The explicit teaching of the specific reading strategies was the independent variable. The students received explicit instruction of the following reading strategies: (a) questioning to clarify meaning; (b) using background knowledge to make connections; (c) making inferences and drawing conclusions; (d) visualizing or creating mental images

from what is being read; (e) determining the most important ideas or themes; (f) synthesizing information; and (g) using fix-up strategies such as skipping ahead, rereading, using a dictionary, and reading a passage aloud. The students were given the National standardized test before the study to identify their reading level before they received the explicit instruction with the specific reading strategies. The same test was then repeated after the explicit reading strategy instruction was implemented. The second set of test scores was the dependent variable. The National standardized test consisted of forty-one questions with five different sub-skills, including: (a) word recognition and vocabulary, (b) reading comprehension-literal, (c) reading comprehension-inferential/interpretive, (d) reading comprehension-evaluation, and (e) literary response and analysis.

The results of the pre and posttest data indicated that there was a significant increase in the mean scores of the students' posttest scores in comparison with their pretest scores. Therefore, the results indicated that the intentional and explicit teaching of specific reading comprehension strategies has a positive impact on the reading comprehension abilities of the students. Most of the students (forty out of fifty-seven) showed growth in the reading comprehension after they received the explicit reading strategy instruction. Additionally, the mean scores of the females' posttests were higher than the mean scores of the males' posttest scores. This difference can be attributed to many things that are not gender related, such as previous instruction, motivation, parental support, and mental ability.

Therefore, it has been determined that teachers using explicit instruction for specific reading comprehension strategies to students benefitted students with their

overall reading comprehension levels. Similarly, female students scored higher than their male peers in reading comprehension, whether it resulted specifically with gender, or if there was some other factor involved is unknown, but the test scores indicated that female students scored higher than the male students.

In addition to the previous research, (Chambers-Cantrell et al., 2010; Hilde, 2004; Li, 2010; Liang et al., 2010), Karasakaloglu, (2010) wanted to determine if other factors, such as grade point average, parental education or occupation, area of study, gender, or age influenced reading comprehension. Researcher Karasakaloglu (2010) conducted a survey to determine how reading comprehension affects students on these different levels: gender, age, high school type, books read per year, and parent occupation. The students who participated in this study were freshmen students of the Primary Education, Science Education, and Social Sciences Education departments of a University. One class has been chosen from each department, so nearly one hundred and twenty students participated in the study.

The researcher used a common reading strategies scale to measure the metacognitive strategies used by students at the university level while they were reading their assigned text and studying relevant material. The scale was a five-point scale with twenty-two items that described the strategies the students utilized while reading the course material. The first sixteen items on the scale were the analytical strategies and the last six were the pragmatic strategies. The items found under the analytical strategies expressed the metacognitive strategies the students were using while they were reading or studying their course material. The items under the pragmatic strategies expressed the practical strategies that help to improve memory while reading. The students were asked

to rate themselves between one and five, with five being the most frequently used that reading comprehension strategy and one meaning that they rarely used that reading comprehension strategy. The maximum score was one hundred twenty-two, and the minimum score was twenty-two.

As a result of the reading strategies scale, there were only two categories that were statistically meaningful in regards to reading comprehension. First, it was found that female students used more reading strategies to help them understand what they are reading more frequently than male students did. This provided the female students with the opportunity to become more successful in terms of reading comprehension than the male students at the University. The other category that showed a statistically meaningful change in regards to the students' reading comprehension was the students' grade point average (GPA). Therefore, the higher the students' GPA, the more frequently the students used specific reading strategies to help them with their reading comprehension. One final category did not reflect a statistically meaningful change in the study, but it did imply that there was a benefit was the number of books the student read per year. As previously stated, there was no statistically meaningful change, but it was determined that that students who read twenty-one or more books get more help from utilizing reading comprehension strategies. Therefore, although not statistically meaningful, it can be implied that while the book reading level increases, so does the use of reading strategies.

On the other hand, there were many categories that did not demonstrate a meaningfully significant change in regards to reading comprehension strategies. In regards to the students' age, there was not a statistically meaningful change, meaning that age itself, did not affect a students' ability for reading comprehension. Similarly, there

was also no significant difference between the reading comprehension ability and the use of specific reading strategies between students who study different fields. Therefore, students who enrolled in the different departments at the University have the same or similar opportunities as their peers in a different university department. Additionally, the type of high school from which a student came also does not have a meaningfully significant change. However, whether or not a student graduated from high school does have a meaningfully significant change. Students with high school diplomas utilize more reading comprehension strategies than students who do not have a high school diploma. Finally, the students' parents' level of education and parents' occupations did not have a meaningfully significant difference with the students' use of reading comprehension strategies.

The previous researchers (Chambers-Cantrell et al., 2010; Hilde, 2004; Li, 2010; Liang et al., 2010) demonstrated how specific reading strategies utilization may assist students with their reading comprehension. Quiocho (1997), however, not only utilized specific reading strategies, but she also attempted to assist students in becoming more independent with the reading strategies they were utilizing. In this study, the researcher attempted to understand why so many of her middle school students were unsuccessful in many of their classes. She attempted to identify and emphasize the need for explicit instruction for using reading strategies in a learning environment for middle school students, and provide strategies that will enable them to become independent readers of expository text. The independent variables were the reading strategies to which Quiocho exposed the students: GIST (Generating Interactions between Schemata and Text), sketch to stretch, K-W-L (What I Know, What I Want to Learn, What I Have Learned), SQ3R

(Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review), QAR (Question Answer Relationships), and mapping and charting. The dependent variable is the scores the students received in their classes and on their personal reflections.

Quiocho conducted this study over the course of one semester, or 12 weeks during a traditional U.S. school year (September to June). She used over 650 diverse students and over 20 teachers at the middle school campus at which she taught.

For this study, Quiocho demonstrated several different reading strategies designed to help students find the information they need to complete assigned tasks. Students were then asked to reflect on each strategy after they were given the opportunity to practice it. The students responded about whether the strategy helped with information finding and text understanding, and whether the strategy helped the student to construct meaning from the text.

The GIST strategy was used with Social Studies texts that had long, difficult passages containing new information. Students worked in small groups, reading aloud short sections of the text. The sketch to stretch strategy is a way for students to receive information in one medium and alter it to another meaning to demonstrate understanding. This strategy is generally used with fiction, but in this case it was used with a Social Studies text that offered information about specific events. The K-W-L focused students' attention to what they already know about a topic. This strategy activates the students' prior knowledge. The SQ3R strategy is designed to be a study technique. This strategy encouraged students to preview a chapter in their textbook to generate meaningful questions they have about that chapter prior to reading. The QAR strategy is designed to help students locate answers to specific questions in a text. Students learn that sometimes

answers to questions are directly in the text, sometimes the answers need to be synthesized by pulling together specific pieces of information, and other times the answers are not in the text and need to be inferred. Mapping and charting was also used as a strategy for students to create charts and organize information found in the text.

After the semester of instruction, the students identified the following strategies as being helpful in learning and remembering material: working in cooperative groups, creating notes from summaries in GIST, reading through a chapter with a friend, mapping ideas with a group, developing the class K-W-L chart, doing SQ3R as an entire class, drawing while someone reads. These responses suggest that students prefer to work in groups where they can actively engage in discussion, debate, and can construct meaning. This study also suggested that if a student or students are struggling in a class; ask them what they need to be successful. Include the student to help collaborate and come up with strategies and ideas to make them more successful

The previous researchers (Chambers-Cantrell,et al., 2010; Chambers-Cantrell & Carter, 2009; Hilde, 2004; Liang, et al., 2010) focused on specific reading strategies to help students with their comprehension with expository texts, McCullum, et al., (2010) focused their study on providing at-risk high school students with another type of reading strategy activity. The researchers McCallum, Krohn, Skinner, Hilton-Prillhart, Hopkins, Waller, and Polite (2010) conducted a study to determine if a specific reading strategy would help students to monitor and enhance their reading comprehension. The researchers designed a reading strategy activity that encompassed the following reading strategies: (a) making connections to text based on their background knowledge, (b) making predictions about text, (c) visualizing text content, (d) asking questions when

they were confused or uncertain about the content, (e) using strategies to summarize text, and (f) solving problems and clarifying information. The activity the researchers designed was the ART (Ask, Read, Tell) activity. This was a simple activity that encouraged the students to practice pre, during, and post reading activities that assist in reading comprehension. The Ask step prompted the students to read the title and ask themselves questions specific to the content of the text. The Read step required the students to stop at the end of every paragraph to determine whether or not they understood what they were reading. The goal of this step was to have the students monitor their comprehension while they were reading. During the Tell step, the students told themselves what they read so they provided a summary of the content. The researchers also added a collaborative piece to determine if peer discussion also enhanced reading comprehension.

One hundred and fifteen students participated on this study. Sixty-five percent of the students were sophomores, twenty-seven percent were juniors, one percent was freshmen, and seven percent were high school seniors. The participants ranged from ages fifteen and eighteen, with sixty-two percent being female and thirty-eight percent being male. Of the one hundred and fifteen students, seventy-two percent were Black, twenty-three percent were White, one percent was Asian, one percent was Hispanic, and three percent were identified as Other.

During this study, the students read 400-word, fourth-grade-level reading passages of a timed reading series over the six-day intervention. One or two passages were read each day. Each of the passages consisted of ten multiple-choice questions, five inference questions and five fact questions and were used to assess student comprehension after the intervention.

This study was conducted over two weeks, during eight consecutive workdays for one hour each day. Three different conditions were implemented during the study to determine which was the most effective for the students. One utilized the regular ART activities, one utilized ART with peer discussion (PD), which was ART plus a two-minute discussion with a peer, and the final group, the control group, had non-ART activities.

Two passages were used most days, except on days four and eight when there was only one passage used. The students were directed to take ten minutes to read the passage and then use three minutes to answer the questions. After the first reading passage, the researchers shortened the reading time to six minutes to conserve time and maintain interest.

In the control group, the students were instructed to read the passage and answer the question in the allotted time period. The students were not prohibited from rereading, but they were not specifically instructed to do so. In all three groups, the different readings were administered three times during the intervention.

The researchers did not find a difference between comprehension across passages assigned to the ART process and the control group. This suggested that instruction and prompting students to read carefully and practice ART did not enhance their comprehension. On the other hand, the researchers did find that ART in addition to peer discussion did significantly increase the students' reading comprehension, which suggested that students learn the most effectively when they are given the opportunity to discuss their new knowledge.

In addition to providing students with specific reading strategies, Serafini (2011) focused his research on using multimodal texts, or texts that use written texts, images, graphics, perspectives, and visual symbols. His research required students to be able to make meaning from graphics and images, but to also examine, analyze, make meaning, and draw conclusions about multimodal texts. The researcher attempted to identify a new type of literacy where students need to be able to understand and comprehend multimodal texts. The three perspectives he used to identify the multimodal texts were art theory and criticism, the grammar of visual design, and media literacies, including advertising. Current adolescent students and readers are encountering different types of texts using modern formats, such as video games, websites, magazines, graphic novels, etc.. Therefore, teachers will need to use different instructional strategies, vocabularies, and knowledge to support the comprehension process.

The researcher's primary focus group was adolescent readers in middle and high school students who were exposed to multimodal texts, meaning they incorporated a variety of modes, visual images, hypertext, graphic design elements, and written text literacies.

The researcher provided the classroom teachers with probing and discussion questions to focus on each of the three perspectives: art theory and criticism, grammar of visual design, and media literacies. Art theory and criticism focused on the idea that all cultures use a system of meaning for non-written images, graphics, and signs. This perspective directed student's attention to the elements that were used to construct visual images, and to produce a working vocabulary for discussions based around the perceptions of visual images and interpretations. The researcher provided the teachers

with a graphic organizer to direct student's attention to the images of the graphics. The first column of the chart instructed the reader to describe and classify various elements of the visual images. The second column asked the students to consider what the elements mean, and the third column asked the students to consider what the visual elements might imply outside the text. Teachers used this chart to help students move from what they notice in the images, to consider the meanings, and then finally implications to society as a whole.

Next, the researcher provided the teachers with guiding questions that helped the students focus on the grammar of visual design, or spatial organization. The researcher further divided this category into composition, perspective, and visual symbols. The composition demonstrated how the objects were organized. The specific aspects of the images are the relative size of the object, color and contrast, and foregrounding and focus. The perspective of the image is how close or how far away the viewer is in regards to the visual elements. The viewer needs to examine how perspective is used to give clues about relationships among characters, and the way the characters and images are considered. Finally, the visual symbols are used to convey meanings beyond the literal level. These symbols require the viewer to look analytically at the visual images to determine meaning, and finally, to generate comprehension. Guiding questions utilized for the visual images included: What is placed in the foreground, What is placed in the background? What catches your eye first? What are the dominant colors? What effects do they have? How is white or negative space used? All of these questions would be utilized by the researcher to encourage the viewer to look more critically at the visual symbols to determine their meaning.

The media literacies developed students' understanding of how media works and to generate meaning from the media. Most media literacy is the investigation of advertisements and the effects they have on consumers through shared meaning, visual syntax, and cultural codes for meaning. This type of literacy asks students to critically read and understand how advertises attempt to manipulate the viewers by eliciting emotional responses, serve as proof that something happened, and establish an implicit link between the product and the consumer (Serafini, 2011).

Therefore, to effectively demonstrate strategies for students to read multimodal texts must result in new questioning techniques that go beyond traditional comprehension strategies. This resulted in a new way of thinking and teaching to ensure student ability to read, interpret, and make meaning of visual texts. Moving beyond the traditional literacy theories and practices will help readers to be fully literate in today's society.

All in all, the articles in this section (Chambers-Cantrell et al., 2010; Hilde, 2004; Liang et al., 2010; McCallum, et al., 2010; Quiocho, 1997; Serafini, 2011) demonstrated the wealth of knowledge about implementing specific reading strategy instruction in any classroom and through the use of standard and multimodal text. Each article took a different approach and some concluded different and conflicting results, indicating there is not one way to implement a reading strategy approach in one's classroom.

Conclusion

Reading comprehension is a skill that students will need to be able to utilize for the rest of their lives. It is not something they will use only during their K-12 educational experience, but will continue to need through college, their professional lives, and in the real world throughout their lives. This is why it is so important to teach students the

importance of reading comprehension and the different aspects of how they will utilize the specific strategies in multiple different settings. Research has suggested that students do realize when they struggle with their reading comprehension and that they want to learn strategies to help themselves improve in this area (Chambers-Cantrell & Carter, 2009; Guthrie et al., 1995; Pitcher et al., 2010). This is why it is so important to provide all students with the necessary tools and skills they need to help them become better readers. Research has demonstrated that students do use specific reading strategies while they are reading, and that better readers frequently use global and problem solving strategies, whereas poorer readers tend to rely on support reading strategies for their understanding (Chambers-Cantrell & Carter, 2009). This type of research is very important when teaching reading, because it is imperative for the teacher to know and understand the different strategies and how to present them to struggling readers in order to increase their reading comprehension. Additionally, the teacher must also be aware of the reading strategies appropriate for advanced readers to make sure all students are being challenged in the classroom.

Similarly, researchers have studied the extent to which students understand the literacy instruction they receive. To this end, Pitcher et al. (2010) and Guthrie et al (1995) concluded that one of the best things a school or teacher can do to improve reading comprehension for students is to provide struggling readers with structured, individualized reading interventions beyond the generic reading program that is intended for any student.

In addition to examining students' perceptions of their own reading comprehension (Chambers-Cantrell & Carter, 2009; Guthrie et al., 1995; Pitcher et al.,

2010), this review explored studies that attempted to determine the best way to teach specific reading strategies to get the maximum results for reading (Chambers-Cantrell et al., 2010; Hilde, 2004; Liang et al., 2010, Quiocho, 1997; Serafini, 2011). Many researchers have attempted to investigate the benefits of teaching specific reading strategies to all readers. Liang et al. (2010) created a new questioning technique called the story map to support students' mastery of the content they were reading; this was an after reading strategy meant to be applied upon finishing a text. Students enjoyed the format for the story map questioning technique, which added additional rigor to their daily activities (Liang et al., 2010). This is important because when a student enjoys an activity, he or she will spend more time and effort on it.

Additionally, this review examined research that has investigated the effects of instruction related to specific reading strategies on different age groups of students (Chambers-Cantrell et al., 2010; Quiocho, 1997). Chambers-Cantrell et al. (2010) concluded that intense reading strategies instruction was more beneficial to younger students than it was with older students. Older students should still be taught and given time to practice using specific reading strategies, but a program that targets reading comprehension strategy instruction was most beneficial for younger students (Chambers-Cantrell et al., 2010). Similarly, Quiocho (1997) focused her research on middle school students to determine what the best strategies are for them to use.

Additionally, when Hilde (2004) studied specific strategies to find the best way to teach reading, she determined that students benefitted the most with their reading comprehension when they have been taught explicit reading strategies, and when they are given the opportunity to work with and interact with their peers. Similarly, Hilde (2004)

found that the students did, in fact, stop using their reading strategies one year later because the current teacher did not put as much emphasis on the specific reading strategies (Hilde, 2004). This demonstrated the importance of teaching specific reading strategies and continuing to teach those specific reading strategies every single year a student is in school. Finally, Serafini (2011) focused on the utilization of specific reading strategies to make meaning out of multimodal texts, which requires the reader to know and understand what reading strategies he or she is using and why those strategies are the most appropriate in specific situations.

Teaching specific reading strategies will be one of the best interventions a teacher can provide for his or her students in regards to their reading comprehension. Students often realize when they are struggling to get meaning from a text, and they want to be able to comprehend what they read so that they will be more successful in school and in life (Chambers-Cantrell et al., 2010; Hilde, 2004; Karasakaloglu, 2010; Li, 2010; Liang et al., 2010; McCallum, et al., 2010; Prado & Plourde, 2011). This is why it is so important for educators to teach specific reading strategies to all students throughout a student's academic career. It is essential for teachers to start teaching these strategies early on in the educational years, and to also continue with the explicit instruction to ensure the students are receiving the best education possible. The research in this chapter demonstrated the importance of explicit attention to and consistent use of specific reading strategies for reading success. Furthermore, the findings of the research reviewed in this chapter emphasize why it is imperative for teachers and schools to take a deeper look at their reading programs and to create cohesive, supportive, and rigorous instructional

contexts that supports students' use of reading comprehension strategies within and beyond their academic careers.

Chapter Three

Procedures for the Study

The purpose of this action research study was to identify the effectiveness of teaching students to use specific reading strategies to assist in their reading comprehension. Based on the classroom teacher's observations, students were not always aware of the strategies they used to generate meaning in a text and similarly, they also lacked the awareness of the tools and strategies they used to generate meaning when they were challenged in a text. Therefore, the classroom teacher wanted to determine whether or not the use of explicit instruction of specific reading strategies, namely monitoring comprehension, asking questions, making connections, and determining importance, assisted students with their reading comprehension.

The information presented in this chapter explains the different methods used to promote the use and awareness of specific reading strategies to assist reading comprehension. This chapter describes the sample, the procedures, the collection of data, and also a brief summary.

Description of sample population

This study was conducted at a Milwaukee suburban middle school. The district serves over 7,000 students between the ages of three to twenty-one, with a pre-kindergarten for three and four-year-olds with special education needs; Head Start; and regular and special education for grades five-year-old kindergarten through grade twelve. The median household income of residents in the county of the school district is $58,600 with service industries, manufacturing, and education representing the largest sectors of employment.

The District provides six elementary schools, kindergarten through grade five; two middle schools, grades six through eight; and two high schools, grades nine through twelve. Additionally, the School District offers an alternative high school program and manages the County Head Start program.

The mission of the middle school is: We will be respectful of ourselves and each other, work together to develop integrity, preserve in the face of difficulty, and strive for excellence. This middle school serves 871 students. The ethnicity of the middle school is as follows: American Indian - 0.5%, Asian - 1.6%, Black - 4.2%, Hispanic - 5.3%, and White - 87.1%. 35.7% of the students are economically disadvantaged. 12.3% of the school population is designated special needs.

The classes that participated in this study were three seventh grade Integrated Language Arts classes, and the students involved in the study were between twelve and thirteen years of age. There were sixty-seven total students in the researcher's classes, but thirty-seven of the student participated in the study because they were the students who returned their signed approved permission slips on or before the deadline. Of the thirty-seven students, seventeen of them were males, and twenty of them were females. There were twelve students from the researcher's first hour class (3 boys and nine girls), eleven students from the researcher's fourth hour class (seven boys and four girls), and fourteen students from the researcher's seventh hour class (six boys and eight girls). Of those thirty-seven students, twenty-eight of them were Caucasian, five of them were African American, four of them were Hispanic, and of the four Hispanic students, two of them were English Language Learners, with Spanish being their first language. Those students

occasionally met with an ELL teacher provided to them by the school district and middle school.

Description of the procedures

This eight-week study was administered during part of the third quarter through the beginning of the fourth quarter of the regular academic year. The lessons occurred during the first, fourth, and seventh class period of each day. First hour began at 8:10am and ended at 9:00am; fourth hour began at 10:48am and ended at 11:36am; and seventh hour began at 1:56pm and ended at 2:44pm. The first class period is the longest period of the day, fifty minutes, to accommodate the daily morning announcements. The other class periods were forty-eight minutes in length. The action research study used approximately ten minutes at the start of each class as the students' warm-up activity where the student practiced the specific reading strategy with at least two different articles each week.

Before the study began, the classroom teacher administered the Upper Middle School level expository text, "Immigration—Part 1" of the Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (QRI-5) to the students without much preparation. The classroom teacher did not explain that students should take notes, or write down important information; she simply asked them to read the passage, provide a summary, and answer the questions. She also directed the students to write "looked back" next to the question if they had to refer back to the text to retrieve an answer. This determined the reading comprehension level of the students, which enabled the researcher to identify their reading comprehension level before they were provided with the specific reading strategy instruction. After the initial test was administered, the classroom teacher introduced the

action research project to her students and distributed the permission slips for the students' parents to sign and verify their son or daughter's approved participation in the study.

On the first day of the study, the classroom teacher explained the new process the students would follow when entering the classroom and completing their warm-up activity. The classroom teacher informed the students that there was going to be an article every single day located on the front table. The students were expected to obtain an article, read it, and then practice the targeted specific reading strategy the classroom teacher modeled. She further explained that the first week would be devoted to the monitoring comprehension reading strategy, the second week would focus on making connections, the third week would consist of asking questions, the fourth week would be centered on determining importance, and the final four weeks would include all strategies for each week. The classroom teacher also explained to the students that she would briefly review and model the specific reading strategy each day so that the students would know exactly what they were expected to do and would be successful with the reading strategy.

The classroom teacher then demonstrated how the students were going to take their notes while they read the article. First, she requested for the students to notice that the article had four columns, two on each side of the paper. Then she provided each student with a piece of loose-leaf paper and directed him or her to fold it in half the long way; this way the students had four sections of paper. Afterwards, the classroom teacher explained that each section of their loose-leaf paper would be designated for one of the four columns of the article. The classroom teacher further modeled for the students to line

up one section of their paper to the first column of the article and to make a small mark on their paper where the text of the article began at the top. Similarly, the classroom teacher then directed the students to make another mark at the bottom of their paper where the text for the article ends. This way, when the student referenced his or her notes the following days, he or she would line up the column and know exactly where he or she made a comment.

On day one, the classroom teacher introduced the new warm-up activity to the students that they were going to be experiencing for the subsequent eight weeks. She explained to the students that reading comprehension is an ongoing process of evolving thinking. When readers read and construct meaning, they carry on an inner conversation within their minds with the text. They hear a voice in their head speaking to them as they read—a voice that questions, connects, laughs, cries. This inner conversation helps readers monitor their comprehension and keeps them engaged in and with the story, concepts, information, and ideas, allowing them to build their understanding as they proceed (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). Then, she showed the students an expository article that would be placed on the front table every time they walked into class. She explained that they would pick up the article, and each day would direct them to utilize the specific reading strategy. She further explained that there would be a new article on the table every Monday and Wednesday. She explained the first week would be devoted to the monitoring comprehension reading strategy. She then reminded the students to fold their piece of loose-leaf paper down the middle, making four columns and then told them they were ready to begin reading the article and taking their notes for the day.

After the students completed the reading and the note taking for the day, the classroom teacher presented to the students the sheet protector in which they would be keeping their notes. That way, the notes would never be lost or forgotten. She also explained that the sheet protector would be on the front table every day for them to collect their notes and their article to get started on the specific reading strategy for that day. After they completed their note-taking, they would once again place their notes in the sheet protector on the front table. This process would then be followed for the entire first week of the study.

On the second day of the monitoring comprehension strategy, the classroom teacher reviewed what the students should do by explaining the monitoring comprehension reading strategy, again. The classroom teacher explained that the students would continue to read the article and to monitor their comprehension. She further explained that the articles the students would be reading for the duration of the study would require about two days to read and to take effective notes about what they read. She expounded that while the students were continuing to read the article, they should pay really close attention to their inner conversation. She directed them to try to note specifically when and where their inner conversation really started to guide their thinking, and what it is trying to get them to think. For example, these notes can be when an idea confirms or contradicts something the reader already thought about the topic, when he or she reads something he or she did not know before, or if the reader encounters some fantastic or emotional writing. Then she reminded the students to write down what their inner conversations were telling them on their loose-leaf paper where they were keeping all of their notes on the article for the week of using specific reading strategies.

The classroom teacher provided approximately ten minutes for the students to write down the thoughts they were having with their inner conversations. The students would then repeat this process on Wednesday and Thursday of that week with a new article. Then on Friday, the students would write a brief paragraph about what they learned from either of the two articles they read, and what they thought the author's purpose was along with a brief explanation.

Week One:

Day of the Week	**Time Length**	**Activity**
Monday (new article)	Ten minutes	Monitoring Comprehension
Tuesday	Ten minutes	Monitoring Comprehension
Wednesday (new article)	Ten minutes	Monitoring Comprehension
Thursday	Ten minutes	Monitoring Comprehension
Friday	Ten minutes	New knowledge learned and author's purpose

During the second week, the classroom teach demonstrated the making connections reading strategy for her students. She reminded her students that some of the first connections that they make while reading are through their background knowledge. The initial connections that good readers make prepare them for what they are about to encounter. By activating the students' prior knowledge, the classroom teacher determined what the students already knew about the subject. The classroom teacher commented that readers naturally made connections between books and the students' personal lives. The more reading in which a reader participates, the more they begin to connect themes, characters, and issues from one book to another, and to the world in which they live.

Once the reader starts to make connections with his or her life, then he or she is encouraged to think about bigger, more expansive issues beyond his or her home, school, or neighborhood. The classroom teacher then demonstrated to the students how to make personal connections with the text while they were reading it.

The classroom teacher further expounded that there were three different types of connections a reader can make: text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world. Text-to-text is when the reader is able to make a connection between the book he or she is reading and another book he or she has read in the past. This can include: comparing characters, story events or plot structures, lessons, themes, and authors. Text-to-self connections happen when the reader can personally relate to what he or she is reading. This connection can be based on experiences he or she had, thoughts, beliefs, or opinions. Text-to-world occurs when the reader can make a connection between what he or she read and what is happening in the world around him or her. These connections can be similarities between the book and governmental issues, societal issues, global issues, or even family and school issues (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). The classroom teacher further directed her students to make at least one connection from each category, text-to-text, text-to-self, and also text-to- world. Once again, there were two different articles provided on Monday and Wednesday to increase the students' independent practice.

Week Two:

Day of the Week	Time Length	Activity
Monday (new article)	Ten minutes	Making Connections
Tuesday	Ten minutes	Making Connections
Wednesday (new article)	Ten minutes	Making Connections

Thursday	Ten minutes	Making Connections
Friday	Ten minutes	New knowledge learned and author's purpose

During the third week, the classroom teacher demonstrated the asking questions reading strategy for her students. She began by explaining that she would be modeling to them another strategy that active readers use when they read. When a reader asks questions he or she wonders about what is going to happen, or about the content, or what a word means. Sometimes he or she is confused and he or she wonders about his or her confusion. The classroom teacher further expounded that when the students read the text and started thinking about the text that they would have questions about the text. The most important questions are the readers' questions while they are reading. In order to be a really good, proficient, active reader, the students need to be asking a myriad of different types of questions. Remember, that it is a good thing when the questions can be answered, so if an answer to a question is found, make sure it gets answered in the notes (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). The classroom teacher provided the students with approximately ten minutes to quickly reread the text from the previous days and to then ask as many questions of which they could think. The third week also followed the same pattern as the first and the second weeks. There would be two articles for the students to practice their new strategy and the final day would be devoted to new knowledge learned and the author's purpose.

Week Three:

Day of the Week	**Time Length**	**Activity**
Monday (new article)	Ten minutes	Asking Questions

Tuesday	Ten minutes	Asking Questions
Wednesday (new article)	Ten minutes	Asking Questions
Thursday	Ten minutes	Asking Questions
Friday	Ten minutes	New knowledge learned and author's purpose

During the fourth week, the classroom teacher demonstrated the determining importance reading strategy. She reminded the students that a reader remembers what is important in a text if he or she wants to learn from the text. When readers determine the importance in a nonfiction text, they understand information and build knowledge. The classroom teacher further went on to explain that nonfiction texts contain features that help the reader to discern what the main ideas and the important details are. Some of these features can include: text structure, graphics, charts, bold words, and possibly footnotes. After describing the reading strategy, the classroom teacher then modeled the activity the students would be completing, the *Topic/Detail/Response* (*TDR*) graphic organizer. She explained that the *Topic* column was for the main ideas; the *Detail* column was where the students recorded the details that related to the topic. This column could also include information and evidence that supports the main ideas. Finally, the classroom teacher explained that because the reader's responses are also very important, the *Response* column was designated for the reader's thoughts. These thoughts can include: questions, opinions, connections, learned information, or also reactions the reader had to new information.

After the students finished the *TDR* organizer, they handed that, along with the notes they completed during the week using the monitoring comprehension, asking

questions, and making connections reading strategies in to the classroom teacher. Week four followed the same pattern as the previous weeks, where the students would receive a new article on Monday and Wednesday and then focus on new information learned and the author's purpose on Friday.

Week Four:

Day of the Week	Time Length	Activity
Monday (new article)	Ten minutes	Determining Importance
Tuesday	Ten minutes	Determining Importance
Wednesday (new article)	Ten minutes	Determining Importance
Thursday	Ten minutes	Determining Importance
Friday	Ten minutes	New knowledge learned and author's purpose

The four weeks that remained in the study only focused on one article per week, but required the students to practice using all four of the different reading strategies. On Monday the article was introduced, and the students had Monday and Tuesday to read the article and to monitor their comprehension. The classroom teacher, of course, reviewed the specific reading strategies each and every day. Wednesday was devoted to making connections, Thursday was focused on asking questions, and Friday would centralize on determining importance. This pattern continued for the remaining four weeks, with each week using and focusing on a different expository article that was chosen based on the time of year, current events, or student interest.

Weeks Five Through Eight:

Day of the Week	Time Length	Reading Strategy

Monday	Ten minutes	Monitoring Comprehension
Tuesday	Ten minutes	Monitoring Comprehension
Wednesday	Ten minutes	Making Connections
Thursday	Ten minutes	Asking Questions
Friday	Ten minutes	Determining Importance

Collection of data. The data for this study was collected in three different ways. First, the classroom teacher administered the *QRI-5* (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) to the students to determine their reading comprehension levels. The students started by completing an anticipatory guide, in which the questions activated the students' prior knowledge and then asked them to make a prediction about what they thought the text would be about. Then, the students read "Immigration—Part I" silently and completed a summary, where the classroom teacher identified how many of the main ideas and the supporting details were provided in the summary. Then, the students answered the *QRI-5* questions about the passage.. The classroom teacher directed the students to try their best to answer the questions without looking back into the text, but if they had to, they needed to write "looked back" next to the question. The classroom teacher then scored the students' answers based on the guidelines from the *QRI-5* instructions.

The second piece of data that was collected was the notes and the *TDR* for each individual article. The notes contained the practice for three of the specific reading strategies: monitoring comprehension, asking questions, and making connections. The *TDR* organizer contained the necessary information about the determining importance reading strategy. Both of the activities were collected on Friday when the students were finished completing the specific reading strategies with their article. The researcher

analyzed the data by rating the types of thoughts, comments, connections, and questions the student provided on his or her notes using a rubric for each reading strategy. Also, The researcher analyzed whether the students identified the main ideas and provided the supporting details from the article.

The final piece of data that was collected was when the classroom teacher administered the *QRI-5* a second time to the students to determine whether or not the use of the specific reading strategies assisted them in their reading comprehension as a post assessment to the study. The students began by filling out an anticipatory guide, in which the questions activated their prior knowledge and then asked them to make a prediction about what they thought the text would be about. This time, the classroom teacher reminded them to read carefully, and to utilize the specific reading strategies they have been practicing for the previous eight weeks. Then, the students read "Immigration—Part II" silently and completed a summary, where the classroom teacher identified how many of the main ideas and the supporting details were provided in the summary. The students were not permitted to use the text when they wrote the summary. Then, the students wrote the answers to the Q*RI-5* questions about the passage. Once again, the teacher directed the students to write "looked back" next to the question if they had to refer back to the text to find the answer. The classroom teacher then scored the answers based on the QRI-5 guidelines.

Summary:

The participants in this study were taught specific reading strategies that were intended to assist them with their reading comprehension. They were provided with twelve different expository articles that encouraged them to continually practice the

specific reading strategies they were using. They monitored their comprehension, asked questions, made connections, and determined importance every week for the eight-week study. The next chapter will analyze and interpret the results that were derived from this study.

Chapter Four

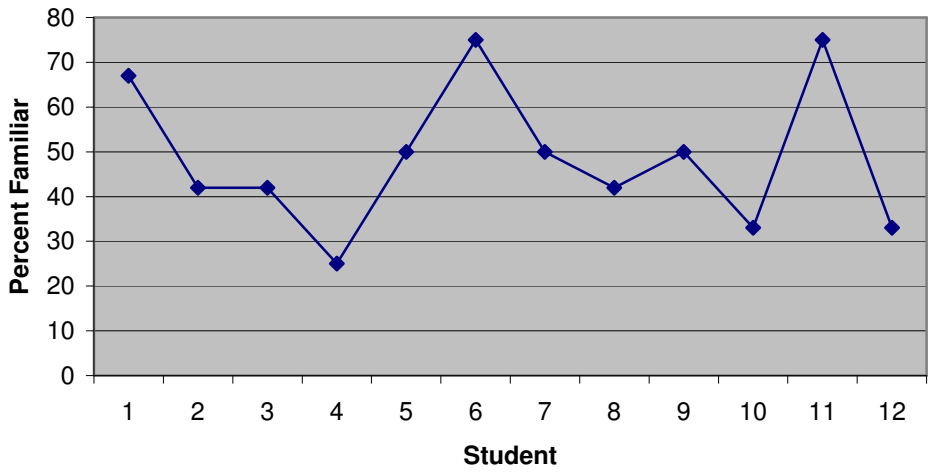
Results

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects that specific reading strategies have on overall reading comprehension. The students followed the procedure of four different reading strategies over the course of the eight-week study, monitoring comprehension, making connections, asking questions, and determining importance. The students were allocated the first ten minutes of each class to read an expository article and to practice using the reading strategies daily. This chapter starts with a description of the data collected and ends with an analysis of the data.

Data Collection and Analysis

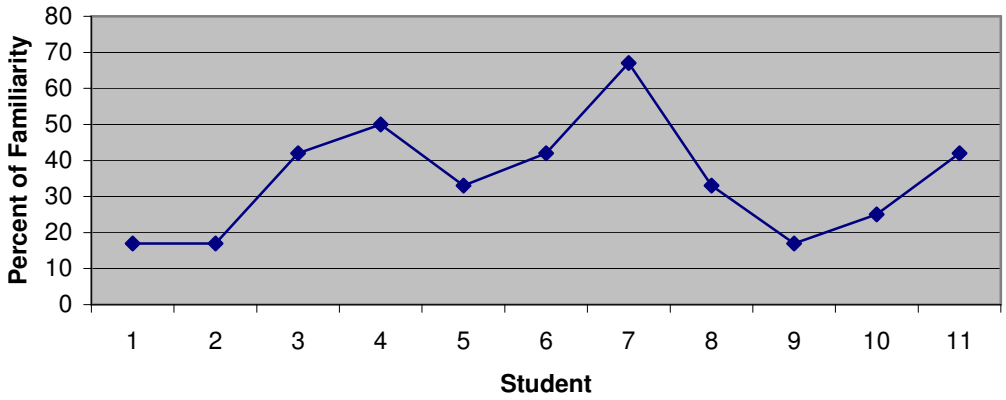
Students' comprehension was pre-assessed through an administration of a seventh grade expository passage of the *QRI-5* (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). The purpose of this pre-assessment was to determine what the students understood from reading the passage and were able to retell before receiving extensive explicit instruction with the specific reading strategies. The researcher attempted to assess the students' background knowledge regarding the topic by administering to the students four questions prior to reading the text. The researcher separated and analyzed the data from the different classes to identify any differences between the students in the different class periods. In the first hour class, twelve students participated in the study and the average prior knowledge for the students was 48.67% familiarity. Figure 4.1 illustrates the individual scores in the researcher's first period class.

Figure 4.1. Period One Anticipatory Guide



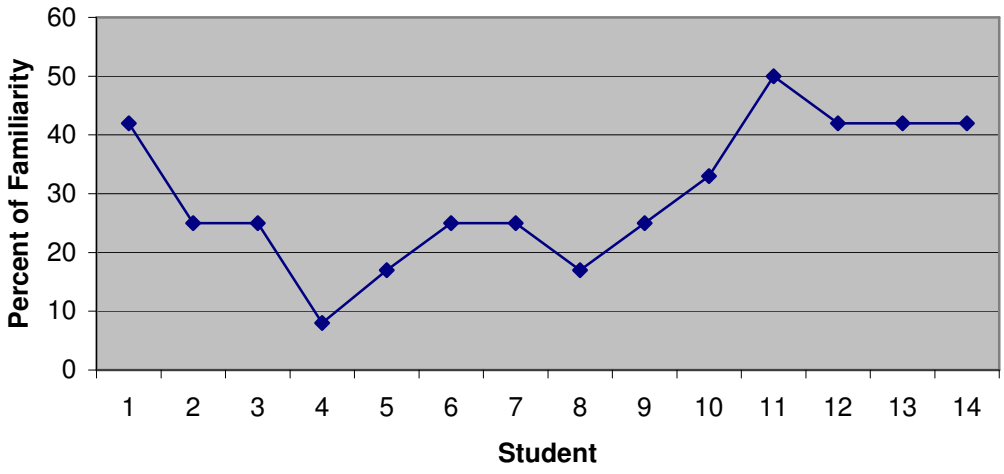
In the researcher's fourth hour class, eleven students participated in the study. Figure 4.2 illustrates their individual scores to determine how familiar they were about the immigration topic. The mean score for all students in the researcher's fourth hour class was 35% familiarity of the immigration topic. Figure 4.2 illustrates the familiarity percentage for each individual student in the class.

Figure 4.2. Period Four Anticipatory Guide



In the researcher's seventh hour class, fourteen students participated in the study, and Figure 4.3 illustrates their individual scores to determine how familiar they were regarding the immigration topic. The mean score for all students in the researcher's seventh hour class was 29.86% familiarity of the immigration topic. Figure 4.3 illustrates the familiarity percentage for each individual student in the class.

Figure 4.3. Period Seven Anticipatory Guide



The three classes demonstrated their prior knowledge regarding the topic for the QRI-V passage (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). All three different classes had different levels of prior knowledge. The researcher's first hour class had the highest level of prior knowledge with 48.67%, followed by her fourth hour class, which had 35%, and then finally, her seventh hour class had the least amount of prior knowledge with 29.86%. In general, prior knowledge will assist the student with greater understanding of the passage by providing them with more knowledge with which they can connect with the text.

After the researcher received the anticipatory guide from the students, she then distributed the *QRI-5* passage text and instructed the students to read the article and then

to write a summary of the specific details the students recalled from the article. Figure 4.4 illustrates the number of details in the article the students from the researcher's seventh hour class recalled from the passage. The mean for the students in the first hour class was 8.92%. Therefore, they recalled approximately 9% of the details that were provided in the article.

Figure 4.4. Period One Details Recalled

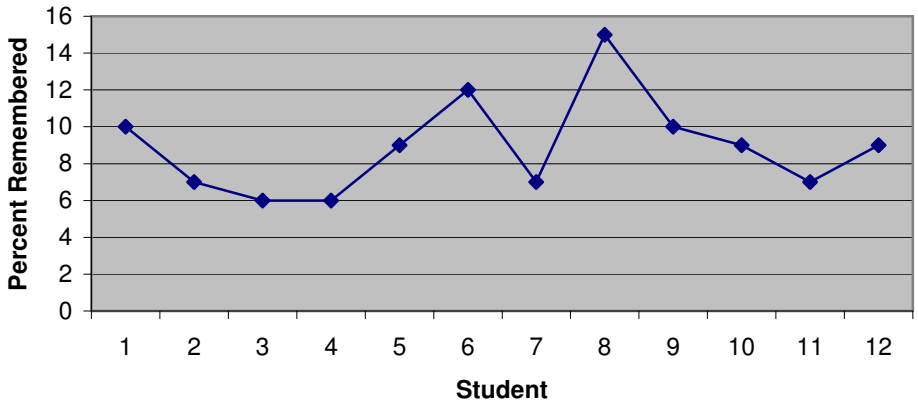


Figure 4.5 illustrates the number of details in the article that the students from the researcher's seventh hour class recalled from the immigration passage. The mean for the students in the seventh hour class was 15.82%. Therefore, the students remembered and were able to recall approximately16% of the specific details that were provided in the article.

Figure 4.5. Period Four Details Recalled

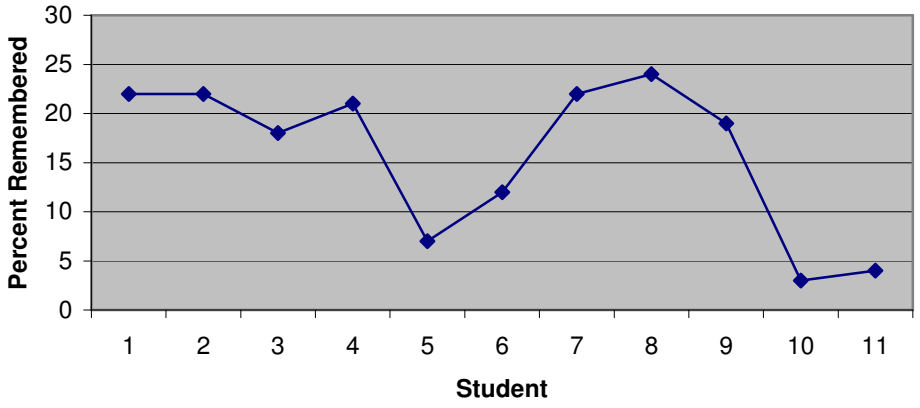
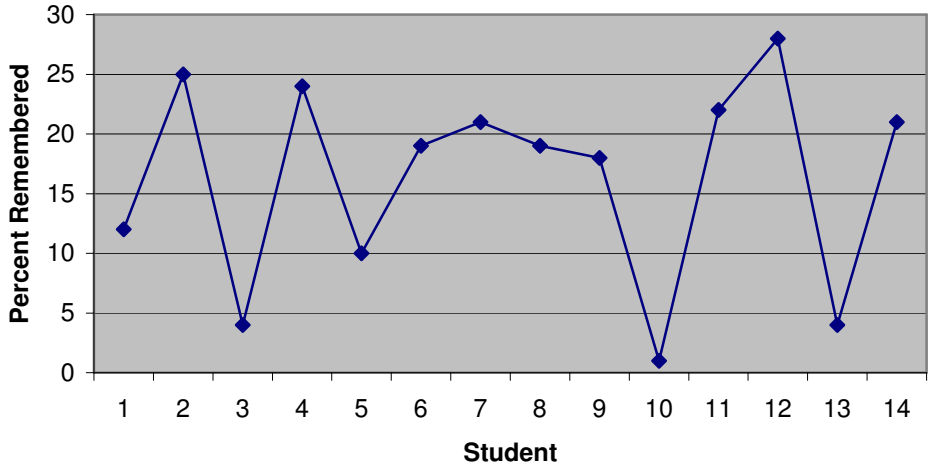


Figure 4.6 illustrates the number of details in the article the students from the researcher's seventh hour class recalled from the passage. The mean for the students in the seventh hour class was 16.29. Therefore, the students remembered and were able to recall approximately16% of the details that were provided in the article.

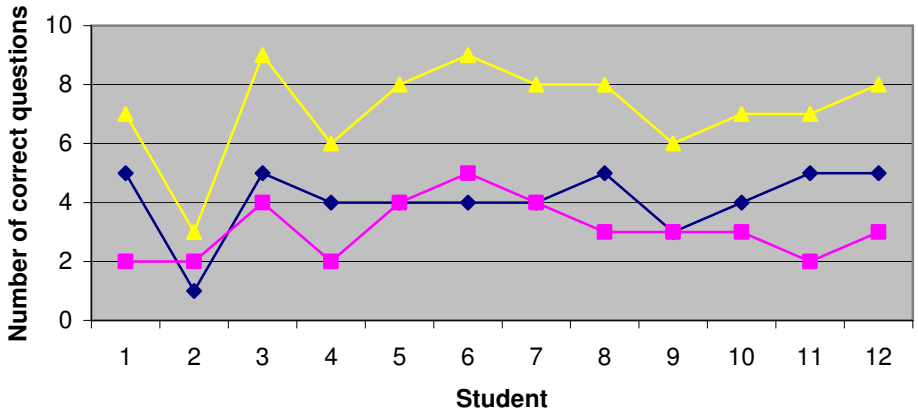
Figure 4.6. Peroid Seven Details Recalled



As a final measure of pre-assessment, the researcher directed the students to answer the questions provided regarding the *QRI-5* passage (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011).

The students still possessed the article and were able to refer back to or "look back" into the text for the answers. In the researcher's first hour class, the mean for the number of correctly answered explicit questions was 4.08 of the five possible questions. The class answered 3.08 implicit questions correctly out of five total questions, and 7.17 questions were answered correctly of the ten total questions. Figure 4.7 illustrates the number of explicit, and implicit questions the students answered correctly. The blue line indicates the number of explicit questions answered correctly, the pink line illustrates the number of implicit questions answered correctly, and the yellow line illustrates the total number of questions answered correctly.

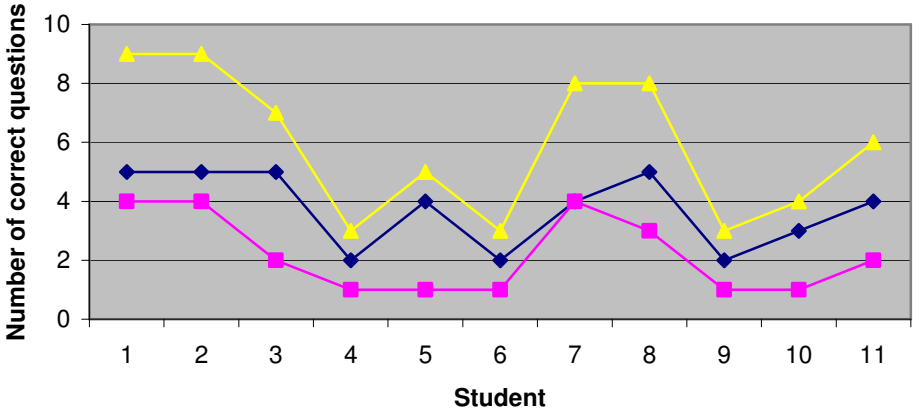
Figure 4.7. Period One Questions Answered Correctly



In the researcher's fourth hour class, the mean for correct number of explicit questions correctly answered was 2.18 of five possible questions, implicit questions correctly answered was 2.18 correct of the five possible questions, and 5.91 total questions were answered correctly of the ten total questions. Figure 4.8 illustrates the number of explicit, and implicit questions the students in the researcher's fourth hour class answered correctly. The blue line indicates the number of explicit questions

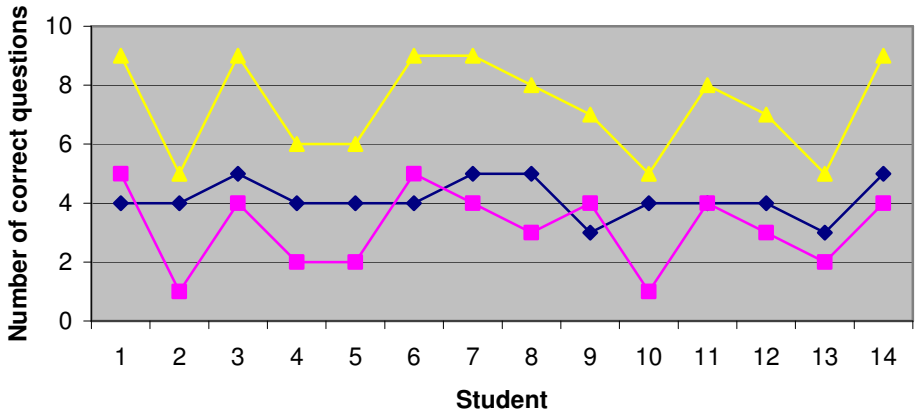
answered correctly, the pink line illustrates the number of implicit questions answered correctly, and the yellow line illustrates the total number of questions answered correctly.

Figure 4.8. Period Four Questions Answered Correctly



In the researcher's seventh hour class, the mean for the number of correctly answered explicit questions was 4.14 of the five possible questions, correctly answered implicit questions was 3.14 of the five possible questions, and 7.29 total questions were answered correctly of the ten total questions. Figure 4.9 illustrates the number of explicit, and implicit questions the students answered correctly. The blue line indicates the number of explicit questions answered correctly, the pink line illustrates the number of implicit questions answered correctly, and the yellow line illustrates the total number of questions answered correctly.

Figure 4.9. Period Seven Questions Answered Correctly



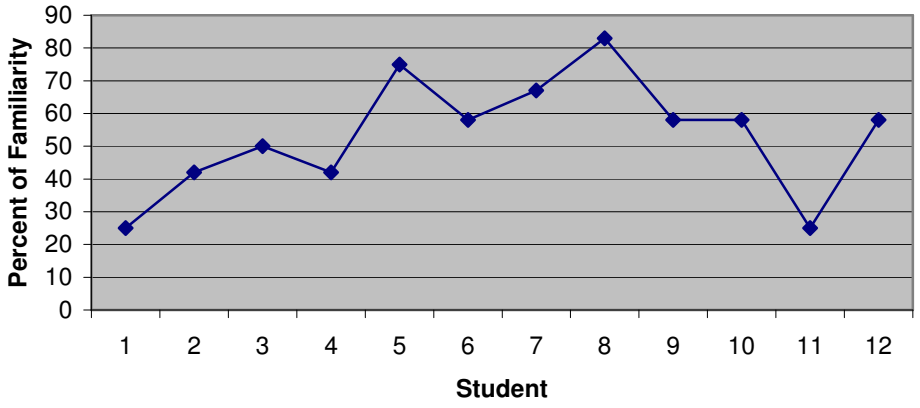
After the pre-assessment of the *QRI-5* passage (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011), the researcher utilized the following eight weeks to explicitly instruct the students on specific reading strategies. The researcher utilized the first week focusing on monitoring comprehension, she focused the second week on making connections, she utilized the third week focusing on asking questions, and she focused the fourth week on determining importance. During weeks five through eight, the researcher used one article to focus on each of the specific reading strategies.

After the eight-week intervention was completed, the researcher then provided another *QRI-5* passage (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) to the students to assess if the reading strategies assisted in improving the students' comprehension. The researcher attempted to assess the students' background knowledge regarding the topic by administering to them four questions prior to reading the text. The researcher separated and analyzed the data from the different classes to identify any differences between the students in the different class periods.

All of the classes' specific data was analyzed using a two-tailed *t*-test to determine if there was a statistically significant improvement for the different specific reading strategies. The level of significance for all tests was set at $p>.05$. The *t*-test was conducted using a two-tailed test because the researcher hypothesized that there would be an effect from the intervention, but she did not specify if the effect would be positive or negative.

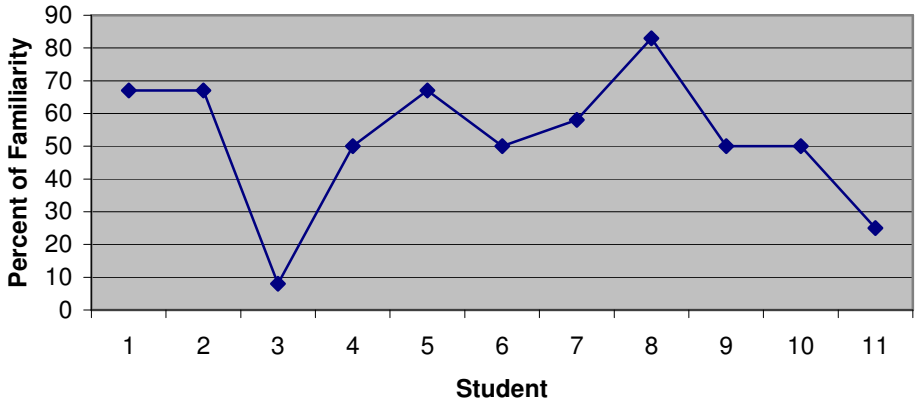
In the first hour class, twelve students participated in the study and the average prior knowledge for the students was 53.42% familiarity. Figure 4.10 illustrates the individual scores in the researcher's first period class. On the pretest, the mean score for prior knowledge was 48.67%, the median was 46%, the mode was 42% and the standard deviation was 16.27. The mean post-assessment score was 53.42%. The *t* value was calculated at 0.57 with a p value of 2.201 with 11 degrees of freedom. According to the Table of Critical Values of the *t* Distribution (Ravid, 2011), the level of significance for a two-tailed test was equal to 2.201 at $p<.05$, which was the level of significance for all the tests for the researcher's first hour class. Because the *t*-test score ($t=0.57$) was less than this critical value, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis at $p<.05$ and evaluated the null hypothesis at $p<.05$, therefore determining that there was not a significant increase in scores based on the utilization of specific reading strategies.

Figure 4.10. Period One Anticipatory Guide



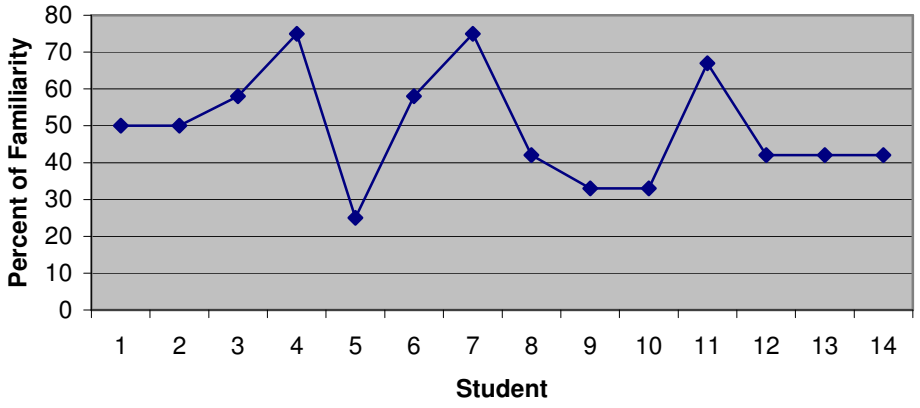
In the researcher's fourth hour class, eleven students participated in the study. Figure 4.11 illustrates their individual scores to determine how familiar they were regarding the immigration topic. The mean score for all students in the researcher's fourth hour class was 52.27% familiarity with the immigration topic. On the pretest, the mean score for prior knowledge was 35%, the median was 33%, the mode was 17% and the standard deviation was 15.74. The mean post-assessment score was 52.27%. The *t* value was calculated at 0.08 with a p value of 2.228 with 10 degrees of freedom. The level of significance for a two-tailed test was equal to 2.228 at $p<.05$, which was the level of significance for all the tests for the researcher's fourth hour class. Because the *t*-test score ($t=0.08$) was less than this critical value, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis at $p<.05$ and evaluated the null hypothesis at $p<.05$, therefore determining that there was not a significant increase in scores based on the utilization of specific reading strategies. Figure 4.11 illustrates the familiarity percentage for each individual student in the class.

Figure 4.11. Period Four Anticipatory Guide



In the researcher's seventh hour class, fourteen students participated in the study. Figure 4.12 illustrates their individual scores in terms of their familiarity with the immigration topic. On the pretest, the mean score for prior knowledge was 29.86%, the median was 25%, the mode was 25% and the standard deviation was 12.19. The mean post-assessment score was 49.43%. The level of significance for this test was set at $p>.05$. The *t* value was calculated at 0.00 with a p value of 2.160 with 13 degrees of freedom. The level of significance for a two-tailed test was equal to 2.160 at $p<.05$, which was the level of significance for all the tests for the researcher's seventh hour class. Because the *t*-test score ($t=0.00$) was less than this critical value, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis at $p<.05$ and evaluated the null hypothesis at $p<.05$, therefore determining that there was not a significant increase in scores based on the utilization of specific reading strategies. Figure 4.12 illustrates the familiarity percentage for each individual student in the class.

Figure 4.12. Period One Anticipatory Guide



After the researcher received the anticipatory guide from the students, she then distributed the *QRI* passage text and instructed the students to read the article and then to write a summary of the specific details the students recalled from the article they read. Figure 4.13 illustrates the total amount of details the students recalled from the text.

On the pretest, the mean score for details recalled was 8.92%, the median was 9%, the mode was 7% and the standard deviation was 2.64. The mean post-assessment score was 34.58%. The level of significance for a two-tailed test was equal to 2.201 at $p<.05$. Because the *t*-test score ($t=0.00$) was less than this critical value, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis at $p<.05$ and evaluated the null hypothesis at $p<.05$, therefore determining that there was not a significant increase in scores based on the utilization of specific reading strategies. The students in the researcher's first hour class had a mean of 34.58%. As a result on average, they remembered approximately 35% of the details that were provided in the article. The result of the *t*-test was 0.00, which does not indicate that there was a significant increase for the familiarity of the passage. This test was based on

the *p* value of 0.05, indicating there was less than a 5% chance that the improvement was due to the intervention.

Figure 4.13. Period One Details Recalled

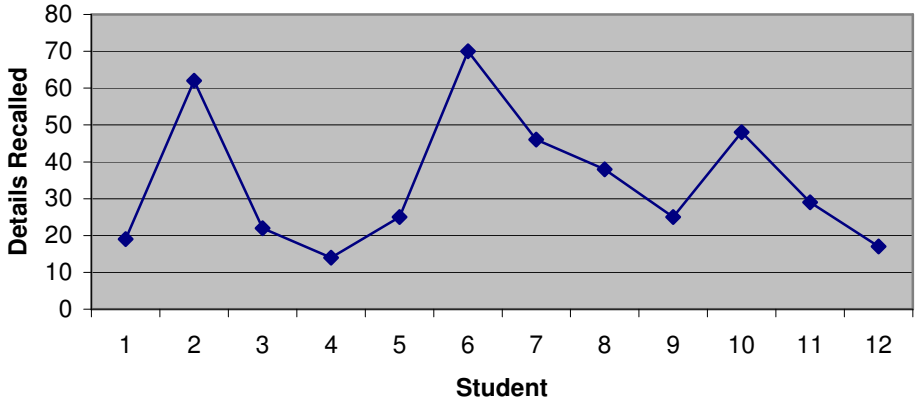


Figure 4.14 illustrates the number of details from the article the students recalled from the passage in the researcher's fourth hour class. On the pretest, the mean score for details recalled was 15.82%, the median was 19%, the mode was 22% and the standard deviation was 7.87. The mean post-assessment score was 27.09%. The level of significance for this test was set at p>.05. The *t* value was calculated at 0.04 with a p value of 2.228 with 10 degrees of freedom. The level of significance for a two-tailed test was equal to 2.228 at p<.05. Because the *t*-test score (*t*=0.04) was less than this critical value, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis at p<.05 and determined that there was not a significant increase in scores based on the utilization of specific reading strategies.

Figure 4.14. Period Four Details Recalled

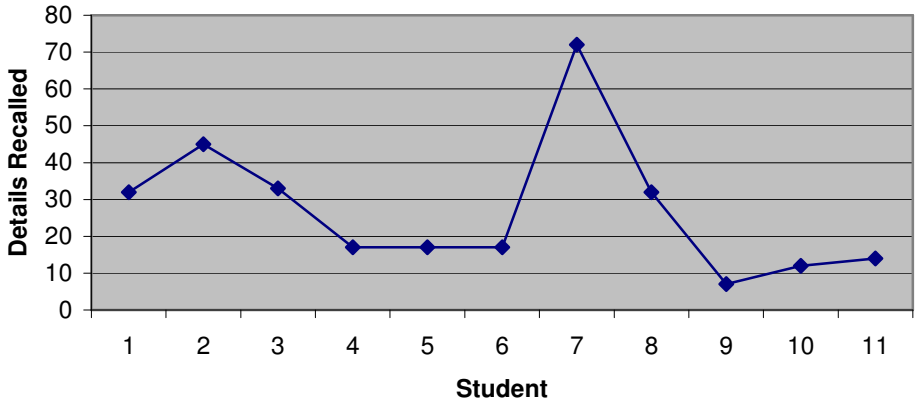
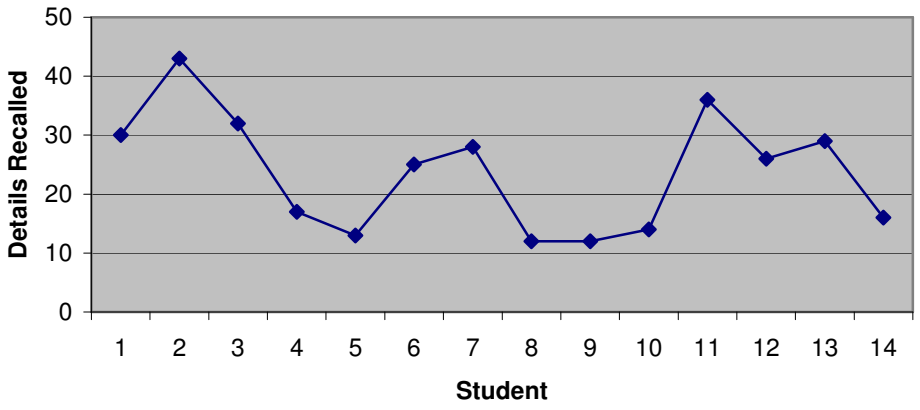


Figure 4.15 illustrates the number of details in the article the students from the researcher's seventh hour class recalled from the passage. On the pretest, the mean score for details recalled was 16.29%, the median was 19%, the mode was 4% and the standard deviation was 8.60. The mean post-assessment score was 23.79%. The *t* value was calculated at 0.04 with a p value of 2.160 with 13 degrees of freedom. The level of significance for a two-tailed test was equal to 2.160 at p<.05. Because the *t*-test score (*t*=0.04) was less than this critical value, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis at p<.05 and determined that there was not a significant increase in scores based on the utilization of specific reading strategies.

Figure 4.15. Period Seven Details Recalled



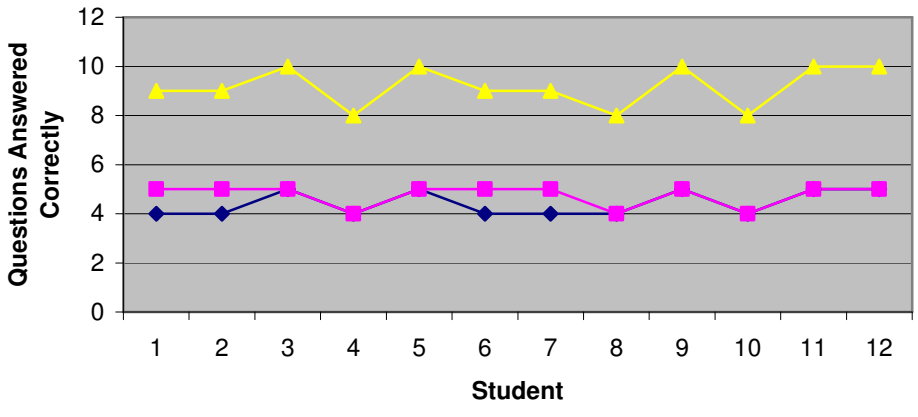
As a final measure of the post-assessment, the researcher directed the students to answer the questions provided regarding the passage (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). The students had the article in their possession, and were able to refer back to the text for the answers. On the pretest, the mean score for the total number of correct explicit questions answered in the researcher's first hour class was 4.08, the median was 4, the mode was 5 and the standard deviation was 1.16. The mean post-assessment score was 4.42 explicit questions answered correctly. The *t* value was calculated at 0.34 with a p value of 2.201 with 11 degrees of freedom. The level of significance for a two-tailed test was equal to 2.201 at $p<.05$. Because the *t*-test score ($t=0.34$) was less than this critical value, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis at $p<.05$ and determined that there was not a significant increase in scores based on the utilization of specific reading strategies.

On the pretest, in the researcher's first hour class, the mean score for the correct number of implicit questions was 3.08, the median was, the mode was 2, and the standard deviation was 1.00. The mean post-assessment score was 4.75 implicit questions answered correctly. The *t* value was calculated at 0.00 with a p value of 2.201 with 11

degrees of freedom. The level of significance for a two-tailed test was equal to 2.201 at p<.05. Because the *t*-test score (*t*=0.00) was less than this critical value, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis at p<.05 and determined that there was not a significant increase in scores based on the utilization of specific reading strategies.

Finally, on the pretest, the mean score for total questions answered correctly was 7.17, the median was 7.5, the mode was 8 and the standard deviation was 1.64. The mean post-assessment score was 9.17 total questions answered correctly. The *t* value was calculated at 0.00 with a p value of 2.201 with 11 degrees of freedom. The level of significance for a two-tailed test was equal to 2.201 at p<.05. Because the *t*-test score (*t*=0.00) was less than this critical value, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis at p<.05 and determined that there was not a significant increase in scores based on the utilization of specific reading strategies. In Figure 4.16, the blue line indicates the number of explicit questions answered correctly, the pink line illustrates the number of implicit questions answered correctly, and the yellow line illustrates the total number of questions answered correctly.

Figure 4.16. Period One Questions Answered Correctly



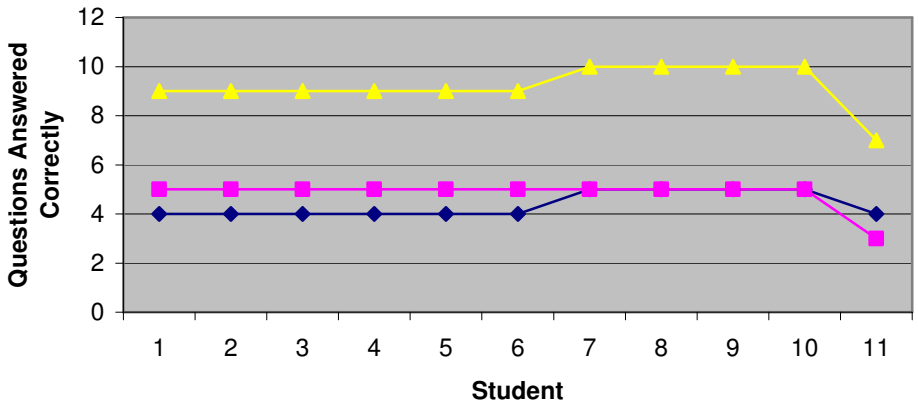
On the pretest of the researcher's fourth hour class, the mean score for the correct number explicit questions was 2.18, the median was 4, the mode was 5 and the standard deviation was 1.27. The mean post-assessment score was 4.36 explicit questions answered correctly. The *t* value was calculated at 0.17 with a p value of 2.228 with 10 degrees of freedom. The level of significance for a two-tailed test was equal to 2.228 at $p<.05$. Because the *t*-test score ($t=0.17$) was less than this critical value, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis at $p<.05$ and determined that there was not a significant increase in scores based on the utilization of specific reading strategies.

On the pretest of the researcher's fourth hour class, the mean score for the correct number of implicit questions was 2.18, the median was 2, the mode was 1 and the standard deviation was 1.33. The mean post-assessment score was 4.82 implicit questions answered correctly. The *t* value was calculated at 0.00 with a p value of 2.228 with 10 degrees of freedom. The level of significance for a two-tailed test was equal to 2.228 at $p<.05$. Because the *t*-test score ($t=0.00$) was less than this critical value, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis at $p<.05$ and, therefore determined that there was not a significant increase in scores based on the utilization of specific reading strategies.

Finally, on the pretest of the researcher's fourth hour class, the mean score for total number of correct questions was 5.91, the median was 6, the mode was 3 and the standard deviation was 2.43. The mean post-assessment score for total number of questions asked correctly was 9.18. The *t* value was calculated at 0.00 with a p value of 2.228 with 10 degrees of freedom. The level of significance for a two-tailed test was equal to 2.228 at $p<.05$. Because the *t*-test score ($t=0.00$) was less than this critical value,

the researcher accepted the null hypothesis at p<.05 and determined that there was not a significant increase in scores based on the utilization of specific reading strategies.

Figure 4.17. Period Four Questions Answered Correctly



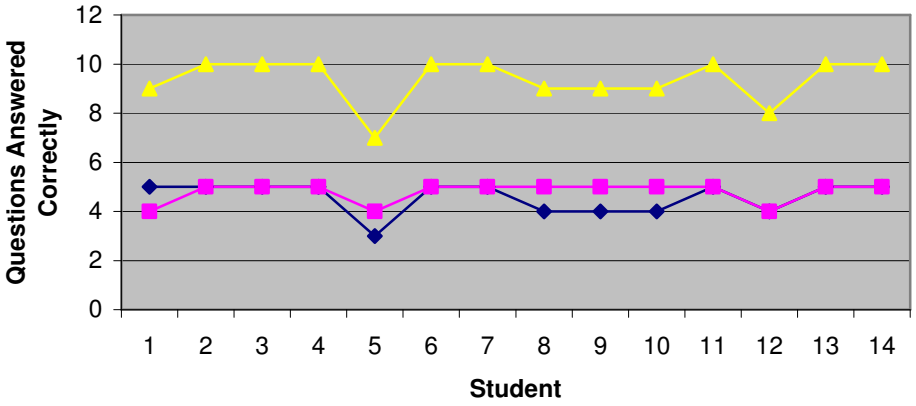
On the pretest of the researcher's seventh hour class, the mean score for the total number of correct explicit questions was 4.14, the median was 4, the mode was 4, and the standard deviation was 0.66. The mean post-assessment score was 4.57 explicit questions answered correctly. The *t* value was calculated at 0.10 with a p value of 2.160 with 13 degrees of freedom. The level of significance for a two-tailed test was equal to 2.160 at p<.05. Because the *t*-test score (*t*=0.10) was less than this critical value, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis at p<.05 and evaluated the null hypothesis at p<.05, and determined that there was not a significant increase in scores based on the utilization of specific reading strategies.

On the pretest of the researcher's seventh hour class, the mean score for the total number of correct implicit questions was 3.14, the median was 3.5, the mode was 4, and the standard deviation was 1.35. The mean post-assessment score was 4.79 implicit questions answered correctly. The *t* value was calculated at 0.00 with a p value of 2.160

with 13 degrees of freedom. The level of significance for a two-tailed test was equal to 2.160 at p<.05. Because the *t*-test score (*t*=0.00) was less than this critical value, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis at p<.05 and evaluated the null hypothesis at p<.05and determined that there was not a significant increase in scores based on the utilization of specific reading strategies.

Finally, on the pretest of the researcher's seventh hour class, the mean score for the total number of correct questions was 7.29, the median was 7.5, the mode was 9, and the standard deviation was 1.64. The mean post-assessment score was 9.36 total questions answered correctly. The *t* value was calculated at 0.00 with a p value of 2.160 with 13 degrees of freedom. The level of significance for a two-tailed test was equal to 2.160 at p<.05. Because the *t*-test score (*t*=0.00) was less than this critical value, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis at p<.05 and evaluated the null hypothesis at p<.05and determined that there was not a significant increase in scores based on the utilization of specific reading strategies. Figure 4.18 illustrates the number of explicit, and implicit questions the students answered correctly. The blue line indicates the number of explicit questions answered correctly, the pink line illustrates the number of implicit questions answered correctly, and the yellow line illustrates the total number of questions answered correctly.

Figure 4.18. Period Seven Questions Answered Correctly



Summary

In order to determine whether the explicit instruction of specific reading strategies assisted in the students' overall reading comprehension, the researcher conducted an eight-week study that implemented to use of four specific reading strategies for students to use while they were reading expository articles. Determining the specific effects of the specific reading strategies consisted of a pre assessment that was administered at the beginning of the study and a post assessment that was administered at the end of the study to identify if the students improved in their reading comprehension. Throughout the course of the study, the students would read articles provided by the researcher and they would practice four different specific reading strategies: monitoring comprehension, making connections, asking questions, and determining importance. As a result of t-tests, the students did in fact improve their overall reading comprehension based on the results of the pre and post assessments, although, the improvements were not statistically significant.

Chapter Five will connect this study to previous research conducted. Also, final conclusions and explanations will be discussed as well as the study's strengths, limitations, and future research recommendations.

Chapter Five:

Conclusions

The purpose of Chapter Five is to connect this eight-week study with existing research to determine the benefits of using specific reading strategies to improve reading comprehension. The researcher used specific reading strategies: monitoring comprehension, questioning, making connections, inferring, and determining importance (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). In addition, other practitioners (Buehl, 2009; Harvey & Daniels, 2009), have extended the work of Harvey and Goudvis (2007) to make the instruction of these specific reading strategies more effective in the classroom. Buehl (2009), Fielding & Pearson (1994), and Wilson (2011) all understood the efficacy of instructing students with the use of each specific reading strategy. Therefore, the implementation of these specific reading strategies is beneficial for students to practice and to master in the classroom to become proficient and advanced readers. These connections from previous research to this study will also be analyzed and discussed. The results that were identified in chapter four will also be discussed and explained. Finally, the strengths and limitations of the study will be addressed as well as recommendations for future studies.

Connections to Existing Research

The role of reading strategies in the classroom has been an increasingly important topic amongst educators because it is such an important skill for students to master (Buehl, 2009; Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Harvey & Daniels, 2009; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Wilson, 2011). Many studies have attempted to address this issue by explaining what specific reading strategies to use and how to use them effectively in the classroom

to increase the students' reading comprehension (Chambers-Cantrell, Almasi, Carter, Rintamaa, & Madden, 2010; Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, & Afflerbach 1995; Hilde, 2004; McCallum, Krohn, Skinner, Hilton-Prillhart, Hopkins, Waller, & Polite, 2010; Pitcher, Martinez, Dicembre, & McCormick, 2010; Quiocho, 1997). The purpose of this eight-week study was to use explicit instruction to teach students to use four different specific reading strategies: monitoring comprehension, making connections, asking questions, and determining importance, to help improve the students' overall reading comprehension. The articles that were summarized in chapter two clearly relate to this study, and the results were similar to other studies that were previously conducted.

The first study to represent this eight-week study was Pitcher, Martinez, Dicembre, and McCormick (2010) designed a case study to determine whether or not students were aware of their strengths and struggles with reading comprehension. The researchers determined that students were very aware of when they struggled in their reading and they wanted to know the strategies that would help them improve. Similarly, Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, and Afflerbach (1995) conducted a study to determine if there were connections between social, cognitive, and home factors that influenced the extent and the amount of reading kids from three different ages read. The researchers determined that students who read frequently used more reading strategies to help them understand what they are reading. This further enforces the idea that teachers must teach specific reading strategies to improve the students' overall reading comprehension, because the better the student gets at reading, the easier it will be for the reader, and he or she will be more motivated to read different types of genres and texts.

Furthermore, Chambers-Cantrell, Almasi, Carter, Rintamaa, & Madden (2010) explored the effects of specific reading strategy instruction on the reading comprehension of struggling adolescent readers. The researchers determined that the most effective way to improve students' reading comprehension was to start early in the students' educational careers. Furthermore, it is essential for students to receive specific strategy instruction every single year. Additionally, Hilde (2004) wanted to identify the effectiveness of different ways to teach reading comprehension. The researcher of this study determined that it was apparent that consistent, prolonged exposure to and practice with specific reading strategies was the only way to ensure long-term retention.

Also, the researchers McCallum, et al., (2010) conducted a study to determine if a specific reading strategy would help students to monitor and enhance their reading comprehension. In the end, the researchers did not find that the utilization of the specific reading strategies improved students reading comprehension, which confirms what this study and other researcher's studies found. McCallum, et al., (2010) did determine that when students were able to discuss and collaborate with other students, their reading comprehension did in fact improve. This demonstrates that students need to have time to discuss their findings and thoughts about what they read to get the most out of what they read. Finally, Quiocho (1997) not only utilized the explicit instruction of specific reading strategies, but she also attempted to assist students in becoming more independent with the reading strategies they were utilizing. The responses from direct student feedback suggested that students prefer to work in groups where they can actively engage in discussion, debate, and can construct meaning. This study also suggested that if a student or students were struggling in a class the teacher should ask the student, or students, what

they need to be successful. The teacher should also include the student to help collaborate and develop strategies and ideas to make them more successful. The tools will essentially help to make students more independent in their reading strategy utilization while they are reading.

The results of this study also indicated that using explicit instruction to teach specific reading strategies does help to improve students' reading comprehension. Although the researcher does not have the ability to determine whether or not the utilization of specific reading strategies will be a benefit to the student as a long-term process, she was able to determine that the strategies a student uses do make him or her a better reader who has greater understanding of the passage. The study demonstrated student improvement with reading comprehension, but the study was not statistically significant. The above studies verified the importance of teaching specific reading strategies to students. Although not all of them resulted in statistically significant improvements, the skills still allow the students to be able gain a better understanding of texts he or she may read.

Connections to Common Core Standards

As well as providing research to verify the importance of using explicit language to teach specific reading strategies, another important aspect to recognize and consider is the Common Core Standards. The Common Core Standards specify that at the end of grade seven, the students must be able to, according to the Core Standard (2) Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text. This skill was demonstrated when the students used their TDR chart to determine the main ideas and supporting details. The

students not only derived main ideas and supporting details, but they also provided a brief summary of the text, thus practicing to accomplish one aspect of the expository text Core Standard. This study also addressed Core Standard (4) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone. This was addressed in the study when students were tracking their thoughts with monitoring comprehension, making connections, and asking questions. The students practiced each strategy to identify the aspects of the Common Core Standards.

Explanation of Results

In addition to the Common Core Standards, assessments and analysis of data is also required. The analysis of data has been separated into six sections. The first section will analyze the pre and post-assessments. The next sections, three through five, will analyze the specific reading strategies: monitoring comprehension, making connections, asking questions, and determining importance. The sixth and final section will discuss the strengths, limitations, and future recommendations of the study.

Section one: Pre and post-assessments. The students first completed a 7th grade expository passage from the *QRI-5* (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) as a pre assessment to determine how well they were able to recall text and answer questions based on what they read. First, the students answered anticipatory questions about the passage to determine their level of prior knowledge on the topic. This same procedure was administered at the end of the eight-week study with another 7th grade expository passage from the *QRI-5* utilized as the post-assessment. The researcher's first hour class improved their prior knowledge, which assists the students in better understanding a

passage, by 4.75%, her fourth hour class 17.27, and her seventh hour by 19.57%. As a whole, the classes had a mean improvement of 13.86%. Even though there was improvement from the pre assessment to the post assessment, the *t*-test indicated that the improvement was not statistically significant.

The next step of the study was to have students read a 7th grade expository passage from the *QRI-5* and then write a summary of what they could recall from the passage. Once again, the classroom teacher administered two different 7th grade expository passages from the QR*I-5* as a pre-assessment and a post-assessment. The researcher's first hour class improved their retelling of the text by 25.66%, her fourth hour class improved by 11.27%, and her seventh hour class improved by 7.5%. As a whole, the classes had a mean improvement of 14.81%, which demonstrated that they improved their ability to recall what they read. Even though there was improvement from the pre assessment to the post assessment, the *t*-test indicated that the improvement was not statistically significant. For example, in the researcher's first hour class, the value of the *t*-test was 0.00 with a p value of 2.201, therefore, since the value of the *t*-test was less than the p value, the test indicated no significance. Similarly, the researcher's fourth hour class had a *t*-test value of 0.04 with a p value of 2.228; once again, there was improvement, but it was not statistically significant. Finally, in the researcher's seventh hour class, the *t*-test value was 0.04 and the p value was 2.160. This indicates that it could be probable that the improvement came from something other than the utilization of the specific reading strategies.

The next step of the study was to have the students answer questions based on the passage they read. The researcher's first hour class improved with the number of explicit

questions answered correctly by .34, not quite half a question, her fourth hour improved by 2.18 questions, and her seventh hour class improved .43, almost half a question. As a whole, all the students improved in their ability to answer explicit questions by .98 or almost a full question indicating that the students improved their ability to find answers to questions that were explicitly stated in the passage. Even though there was improvement from the pre assessment to the post assessment, the *t*-test indicated that the improvement was not statistically significant. For example, in the researcher's first hour class, the value of the *t*-test was 0.34 with a p value of 2.201, therefore, since the value of the t-test was less than the p value, the test indicated no significance. Similarly, the researcher's fourth hour class had a *t*-test value of 0.17 with a p value of 2.228; once again, there was improvement, but it was not statistically significant. Finally, in the researcher's seventh hour class, the t-test value was 0.10 and the p value was 2.160. This indicated that it was conceivable that some other factor could have been responsible for the improvement of the score, and not necessarily the implementation of the specific reading strategies.

The students also were directed to answer implicit questions from the passage, meaning that they would have to infer the correct response, rather than being able to refer back to the text for the answer. The researcher's first hour class improved the number of implicit questions answered correctly by 1.67 questions, her fourth hour class improved by 2.64 questions, and her seventh hour class improved by 1.65 questions. The average for all three classes indicated that there was improved ability to answer implicit questions by 1.99 questions. This indicated that by using the specific reading strategies, students were more equipped to infer answers to questions that were not explicitly stated in a passage. Even though there was improvement from the pre assessment to the post

assessment, the *t*-test indicated that the improvement was not statistically significant. For example, in the researcher's first hour class, the value of the *t*-test was 0.00 with a p value of 2.201, therefore, since the value of the t-test was less than the p value, the test indicated no significance. Similarly, the researcher's fourth hour class had a t-test value of 0.00 with a p value of 2.228; once again, there was improvement, but it was not statistically significant. Finally, in the researcher's seventh hour class, the t-test value was 0.00 and the p value was 2.160. This demonstrated the possibility that something other than the implementation of the specific reading strategies improved the overall reading scores.

Overall, the students in the researcher's first hour class improved their question responses by 2 questions, her fourth hour class improved by 3.27 questions, and her seventh hour class improved by 2.07 questions. Based on all three classes, the students improved their ability to answer explicit and implicit questions by 2.45 questions. This indicated that when students utilized specific reading strategies, their ability to answer explicit and implicit questions increased. Even though there was improvement from the pre assessment to the post assessment, the *t*-test indicated that the improvement was not statistically significant. That means that it may be likely that the improvement occurred from something other than the utilization of the specific reading strategies. Even though there was not a statistical significance in the students' improvement with their pre and post assessments, the specific reading strategies they began to use did have a positive impact on the students' reading comprehension.

Section two: Monitoring comprehension. The classroom teacher utilized the first week and the final four weeks focusing on the monitoring comprehension reading

strategy. She explained to the students that when readers read and construct meaning, they carry on an inner conversation within their minds with the text. They hear a voice in their head speaking to them as they read—a voice that questions, connects, laughs, cries. This inner conversation helps readers monitor their comprehension and keeps them engaged in and with the story, concepts, information, and ideas, allowing them to build their understanding as they proceed (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). At the beginning of the study, the students were not very detailed with the notes they were taking that reflected their inner conversations. Many of the students used one-word responses, like "wow," or "interesting," or "I didn't know that." As the weeks progressed, however, the students' responses became more clear and detailed. One example of a detailed response written during the middle of the study was, "That is shocking to me! I always knew that people would play pranks on April Fool's Day, but I had no idea how serious some of the pranks could be. I would be very disappointed if a friend of mine made a mistake that big!" Another example of a detailed response was based on an article about winter safety. "I don't like cold weather, which is why I am so pleased with this winter-it has been so warm. I would feel terrible if it was because of global warming and the planet was actually getting worse. Anyway, I am enjoying the warm winter while I can." Not only did this student specify her opinion, she also took it a step further by illustrating that there might be long-term consequences because of the weather, but she still appreciates the warmth. These examples demonstrated how the students' thinking started out very basic and one-dimensional, but then turned out to be thought provoking and reflective. The students' responses also started to improve when they started to use the making connections reading strategy while they were reading their articles.

Section three: Making connections. The classroom teacher utilized the second week of the study and the final four weeks focusing on the making connections reading strategy. She commented that readers naturally made connections between books and one's personal life. The more reading in which a reader participates, the more they begin to connect themes, characters, and issues from one book to another, and to the world in which they live. Once the reader starts to make connections with his or her life, then he or she is encouraged to think about bigger, more expansive issues beyond his or her home, school, or neighborhood.

The classroom teacher further expounded that there were three different types of connections a reader can make: text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world. Text-to-text is when the reader is able to make a connection between the book he or she is reading and another book he or she has read in the past. This can include: comparing characters, story events or plot structures, lessons, themes, and authors. Text-to-self connections happen when the reader can personally relate to what he or she is reading. This connection can be based on experiences he or she had, thoughts, beliefs, or opinions. Text-to-world occurs when the reader can make a connection between what he or she read and what is happening in the world around him or her. The connections can be similarities between the book and governmental issues, societal issues, global issues, or even family and school issues (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). Similar to the monitoring comprehension reading strategy, the students began by making vague and fairly basic connections to their books. At the beginning of the second week, the students were making generic connections like, "I like playing football, too," or "That reminds me of a book last year."

Even though they were making connections from the different categories, text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world, they were failing to be profound with their connections.

Towards the end of the study, one of the best connections was produced in the researcher's seventh hour class; the connection was personal and insightful. "That reminds me of a time when I went camping with my family up north. That was when I caught my first fish and my dad took a picture of it. I remember being so proud of what I did that I wanted to tell everyone I knew about it. I understand how this man in the article feels because it made me want to fish all day just to feel that feeling again. I still hope to have that feeling again!" This student empathized with the man from the article, allowing him to make a connection, which can also turn into a bond. The making connections reading strategy encouraged the students to start relating what they read to their own personal lives. That requires comprehension and the ability to understand what they read. The students were then instructed to ask meaningful questions while they were reading and to try to generate the correct answers.

Section four: Asking questions. The classroom teacher utilized the third and the final four weeks of the study focusing on the asking questions reading strategy. She explained to the students that when a reader asks questions he or she wonder about what is going to happen, or about the content, or what a word means. Sometimes he or she is confused and he or she wonders about his or her confusion. The classroom teacher went on to explain that when the students read the text and started thinking about the text they would have questions. The most important questions are the readers' questions while they are reading. In order to be a really good, proficient, active reader, the students need to be asking lots of questions. Remember, that it is a good thing when the questions can be

answered, so if an answer to a question is found, make sure it gets answered in the notes (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007).

The asking questions reading strategy followed the same pattern as the monitoring comprehension and making connections reading strategies. The students began by producing very basic and sometimes meaningless questions about the article. At the beginning stages of the asking questions reading strategy, the students would ask questions like, “What does that word mean?” or “What happened after that?” or even just “Why?” Toward the end of the study, the students started to answer their questions in their notes and also use context clues to help them figure out a meaning. One example of a great question is an example taken from my first hour class. “What would happen if you got frostbite? The article tells you what you should not do, like clap your hands, but what should you do? I would try to put my bare hands underneath my skin and next to my body because I would hope that my natural body heat would maybe increase the temperature.” This demonstrates the student asking a meaningful question, finding support from the article to reinforce why she had the question, and providing a possible solution. This example demonstrates this student’s ability to utilize what she read about the article and to compose a significant question and to provide a possible answer. After the students were instructed on the first three reading strategies, they were then instructed how to pull out the important or main ideas and the supporting details of a text. The students were able to use their notes to identify the main ideas and details in order to fill out the *Topic, Detail,* and *Response* chart.

Section five: Determining importance. The classroom teacher utilized the fourth week and the final four weeks of the study focusing on the determining importance

reading strategy. She reminded the students that a reader remembers what is important in a text if he or she wants to learn from the text. When readers determine the importance in a nonfiction text, they are understanding information more fully and building knowledge. The classroom teacher further went on to explain that nonfiction texts contain features that help the reader to discern what the main ideas and the important details are. Some of these features can include: text structure, graphics, charts, bold words, and possibly footnotes. After describing the reading strategy, the classroom teacher then modeled the activity the students would be completing, the *Topic/Detail/Response* (*TDR*) graphic organizer. She explained that the *Topic* column was for the main ideas; the *Detail* column was where the students recorded the details that related to the topic. This column could also include information and evidence that supports the main ideas. Finally, the classroom teacher explained that because the reader's responses are also very important, the *Response* column was designated for the reader's thoughts. These thoughts can include: questions, opinions, connections, learned information, or also reactions the reader had to new information.

Once again, the determining importance reading strategy followed the same pattern as the previous three reading strategies: monitoring comprehension, making connections, and asking questions. At the beginning of the determining importance reading strategy, the students were unable to identify the main ideas and the details. This reading strategy followed the same pattern as the previous three reading strategies in that the students were vague with their main ideas and details, but as they continued to practice, the responses did improve. For example, at the beginning of the determining importance reading strategy, one student read an article about fire extinguishers and the

safety feature wrote “Different types of fire extinguishers” in the *Topic* column, she wrote “2 pounds, 5 pounds, and 10 pounds” in the *Detail* column, and then she wrote “I think the stove top would be the most useful to me” in the *Response* column. Clearly, she did not expend time and effort on her TDR chart, as evidenced by her vague and basic responses. Towards the end of the study, the same student read an article about cigarettes and the effects they have on people. In the *Topic* column she wrote, “The ingredients in cigarettes are very bad for you, they can also get you addicted to them.” In the *Detail* column she wrote,

- “Tar- the tar used on streets is in cigarettes.
- Hydrogen Cyanide- chemical used to kill rats.
- Benzene- manufacturing gasoline
- Acetone- nail polish remover
- Formaldehyde- used to preserve dead bodies
- Ammonia- a chemical used to clean houses
- Nicotine- addicting drug
- Carbon Monoxide- car gas exhaust
- Breathing in smoke is harmful both smokers and nonsmokers
- People who smoke are 30 times more likely to develop lung cancer
- Infants and young kids get 300,000 cases o flung cancer each year”

Clearly, this student spent a lot more time referring back to the article to get as many important details as she could find. Finally, in the *Response* column, she wrote, “Why would people even make a drug with all of that junk that kills you in it? Why do people think it is cool to smoke? Smoking is really disgusting and I don’t know how anyone

smokes all of those ingredients. A lot of people die from smoking, so why do people still smoke? I will NEVER smoke!" Not only did this student pull out many more details, but she also utilized more time reflecting on the motivation of other people and also making a personal statement about how she felt about the topic.

The examples from the specific reading strategies demonstrate the students' ability to improve their thinking when it involves: monitoring comprehension, making connections, asking questions, and also determining importance. The students became better equipped to encounter and master expository material and they eventually were able to contend with more difficult texts. The students also continued to utilize the different reading strategies they learned in this study when they were working on other assignments for different classes. The next section will focus on the strengths and the limitations of the study and the researcher will also provide her recommendations for future studies.

Strengths, Limitations, and Recommendations

This next section will outline the strengths, the limitations, and the researcher's further recommendations for the study. After much reflection, the researcher has determined the aspects of here study that were effective, and what would need to be addressed for any future studies that may align with the same subject matter. One difficulty the researcher faced in her study was that the population for this study was derived from the classroom teacher's classroom. The ability level of the students varied greatly, and some were ELL students, which was a challenge because there were occasional language barriers in regards to the text for these students. The premise of this

study was to determine if using explicit language to teach specific reading strategies would improve students' overall reading comprehension.

Strengths. The most significant strength to this study was the enjoyment the students exhibited while reading the articles. The classroom teacher specifically chose the articles for her students to read based on interest, current events, and time of year. The students looked forward to the articles they were going to read.

Another strength of this study was the students' ability to apply what they learned in the study to other assignments and also other classes. The students were able to adapt their strategy usage whether they were reading expository articles, fiction novels, or even textbooks. This demonstrates the importance of this study because the students will be able to take what they learned about the specific reading strategies and apply them to different situations, which implies it will become a life-long skill. Although there were impressive strengths about the study, there were also some limitations that may have affected the outcome.

Limitations. The primary limitation of this study was the amount of time provided to the students to annotate their articles. A number of articles were more difficult than others, and when that occurred, some of the students were not able to finish their notes or their TDR chart. When this was the case, the students would submit their unfinished notes because the classroom teacher kept all the notes together for each class in her classroom to make sure no one ever lost their notes.

Additionally, the *QRI-5* (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) also became a limitation in the study. Although it is an excellent tool to identify strengths and weakness in a student's reading comprehension, and assist in identifying the student's reading level, the different

passages only allow for ten questions to be answered per passage. This was a limitation because it did not allow the students to improve as dramatically as they could have if they were provided with additional questions. It is also possible that the results of the study would have been statistically significant if they students were provided with the opportunity to answer more explicit and implicit questions regarding the different passages they read.

Another limitation of this study is related to time. Being that this was an eight-week study, it did not allow for much personal growth for each student. The students should be given more time to develop as a student in regards to the different reading strategies. It would have been more beneficial to develop a longer study.

Recommendations. There has been a large amount of research conducted regarding the utilization of specific reading strategies to improve students' comprehension (Chambers-Cantrell, et al., 2019; Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Guthrie, et al., 1995; Hilde, 2004; McCallum, et al., Pitcher, et al., 2010; Quiocho, 1997; Wilson, 2011), which demonstrates the importance of utilizing explicit instruction to instruct students about specific reading strategies. One possible revision to this study is that future variations could lengthen the time allocated for the study. Provided with the opportunity, it would be interesting to determine how the students in this study would perform on future reading tests and whether or not they continued to utilize the specific reading strategies without prompting from their teacher. A number of researchers have already attempted to conduct long-term studies to determine the effects of teaching specific reading strategies, and it is a direction in which this topics merits attention (Hilde, 2004).

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if using explicit instruction to teach specific reading strategies would improve students' overall reading comprehension. The participants in this study received explicit instruction centered on four different specific reading strategies: monitoring comprehension, making connections, asking questions, and determining importance. They were provided with time to practice each reading strategy with multiple different articles to ensure full understanding of the strategies and how to use them. Although the data does not reflect a statistically significant improvement based on the specific reading strategies, the students were provided with a number of important tools to help them be more accurate and efficient when they are reading texts. Ideally it would be fortuitous to have been able to implement a longer study that started earlier in a student's career and that followed him or her through high school to determine the long-term effects from using specific reading strategies. But, for this study, there was only eight weeks, and the eight weeks did not appear to have a statistical improvement on the students' utilization of specific reading strategies.

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