The effects of teaching the academic language of language arts to secondary long-term English learners

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The Dissertation Committee for The University of Texas at Brownsville Certifies that this is the Approved Version of the Following Dissertation:

The Effects of Teaching the Academic Language of Language Arts to Secondary Long-Term English Learners

By

Mary Soto

A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the College of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

In the Field of Curriculum and Instruction

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University of Texas at Brownsville

(October, 2011)
The Effects of Teaching the Academic Language of Language Arts to Secondary Long-Term English Learners

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty at the College of Education
The University of Texas at Brownsville

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of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctorate in Education in Curriculum and Instruction

By
Mary Soto

November 2011
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to long-term English learners who experience the challenge of learning English and learning in English. This work is also dedicated to all of those who dedicate their time to helping these learners achieve academic success.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank all of the people who supported me and encouraged me throughout this process. First, I would like to thank my parents and role models. Drs. David and Yvonne Freeman, who have supported me my entire life. Their time, patience, guidance, and direction as I pursued this degree was invaluable.

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ABSTRACT

While the majority of English language learners are found in elementary schools, an alarming number of these students are entering secondary schools. These secondary students are long-term English learners, students who have been in U.S. schools for seven years or longer. Long-term English learners struggle with academic success, and educators need to find ways to support them.

In this qualitative study, the effects of teaching academic vocabulary and concepts to 10th grade Hispanic long-term English learners in a language arts class at a large, South Texas high school were explored. The researcher observed students as they were involved in five different pedagogical structures, interviewed the students to determine their perception of how those structures supported their learning, and reviewed student work done while involved in those structures. The data collection included student documents, classroom observations, and interviews.

The most successful practices for these students included teacher modeling and grouping with positive interdependence. Findings revealed that although some pedagogical structures were somewhat effective in helping long-term English learners with the acquisition of the academic vocabulary and concepts of English language arts, these students still need a great amount of scaffolding and monitoring combined with additional time to be consistently successful.

Keywords: English language learners, Long-term English learners, academic language, language arts, secondary schools
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Latino students are the largest and most rapidly growing ethnic minority in the United States. This population is not succeeding in U.S. schools (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). A large number of these Latinos are English language learners (ELLs) who historically struggle academically (García & Godina, 2004). In the last few years, there has been a focus on Latino ELL students in elementary schools, but more attention needs to be directed towards older ELLs as an alarming number of these students are now entering and failing in secondary schools (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2010).

ELLs who have been in the United States seven years or longer are known as long-term ELLs (Corson, 1997; Meltzer & Hamann, 2005; Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Olsen, 2010). Many long-term ELLs are not experiencing academic success in U.S. schools (Corson, 1995; Meltzer & Hamann, 2005; Freeman & Freeman, 2009). Educational researchers argue that teaching students, specifically long-term ELLs, academic language may be the key to improving their academic performance (Cummins, 1981, 2008).

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of teaching academic concepts and vocabulary to long-term ELLs. In this chapter, I will begin by reviewing the demographics of ELLs in the United States, Texas, and in the south Texas school district that will be the focus of this study. In addition, I will discuss the difference in the demographics of foreign born and U.S. born ELLs. Next, types of ELLs will be discussed. From there, I will explain the purpose of the study and state the research question. The significance of the study as well as the theoretical underpinnings related to
the research will be presented. Finally, limitations and assumptions related to this study will be mentioned.

**Demographics of ELLs**

Thomas and Collier (1997) predict that by the year 2020, at least 50 percent of school-aged children will be of non-Euro-American background and by the year 2030, language minority and African American students will be the majority in U.S. schools. According to the Migration Policy Institute (2010), there were 5.3 million ELLs enrolled in U.S. schools during the 2007-2008 school year. That was 10.7 percent of the U.S. K-12 population. In Texas during the same time period, there were 701,799 ELL students enrolled in K-12 schools making up 15 percent of the students enrolled in Texas schools (Migration Policy Institute, 2010). In Brownsville Independent School District where this study will take place, there were 49,155 students enrolled during the 2009-2010 school year. Of these, 16,779, or approximately 35%, were classified as ELLs. While immigration accounts for some of the increase in ELLs, as Batalova, Fix, and Murray (2007) point out, the majority of ELLs in this country (57%) are born here.

**Types of ELLs**

Before educators can begin to assess and evaluate the needs of ELL students, they need to understand that these students are not all the same. Programs that are designed to help these students are based on the assumption that all ELLs are alike. Freeman and Freeman (2002) explain that the differences between different types of ELLs in schools are not often recognized. Educators tend to put all ELLs into one category. Freeman and Freeman found that there are three groups of ELLs in U.S. schools: recent arrivals with
adequate formal schooling, recent arrivals with limited formal schooling, and long-term English learners.

**Adequate Formal Schooling**

Students who have had schooling in their native country and enter U.S. schools with high levels of literacy, academic content knowledge, and cognitive development in their native language are the adequate formal schooling students (Freeman & Freeman, 2002). Often, these students have also been taught some English in their native country. These students only need to transfer what they have learned in their native language to their English learning. These students tend to experience academic success. They catch up to their English-speaking peers more quickly than other types of ELLs (Freeman & Freeman, 2002)

**Limited Formal Schooling**

Like the newly arrived with adequate formal schooling students, limited formal schooling students have been in the United States five years or less. Freeman and Freeman (2002) explain that the main difference is that these students are not up to grade level in their native language. The students are not up to grade level for different reasons. Sometimes these students have had interrupted schooling. Some have had to live or work in communities where schooling was not always available. There are also limited formal schooling students who come from rural communities where schools do not provide the level of education that they need in order to be at the same level as their peers in U.S. schools. Not surprisingly, students with limited formal schooling struggle academically.
Long-Term English Language Learners

Long-term English language learners are those students who have been in U.S. schools for seven years or more (Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Olsen, 2010). According to Freeman and Freeman (2002), for the most part, these students are not academically successful. They tend to be below grade level in reading, writing, and math. These students receive adequate grades. This can lead to false perceptions about their academic achievement. Their low level of academic achievement can be seen through their low standardized test scores.

Although some long-term ELLs received bilingual education in elementary school Freeman and Freeman (2002) found that they generally were not in any consistent program. These students usually have oral English skills but do not have the academic proficiency needed to be at the same level as their English-speaking peers.

Adolescent ELLs entering secondary schools face the challenge of learning academic subject matter in a new language. These students face a number of challenges that are “local and global in nature, as they negotiate the linguistic academic and social world of schooling” (Walqui, 2006, p. 159).

Olsen (2010) explains that by the time long-term ELLs enter high school, there is a set of characteristics that describe their overall profile. One characteristic is that long-term ELLs struggle academically. These students have unique language issues that include high functioning social language and very low levels of academic language. They tend to have significant deficits in reading and writing skills. They do not usually move beyond the intermediate level of English proficiency, and there are significant gaps in their academic background knowledge.
According to Olsen’s (2010) findings, long-term ELLs have often developed habits of non-engagement and learned to be passive and invisible in school, especially in classroom settings. The majority want to go to college but are unaware that their “academic skills, record, and courses are not preparing them to reach their goal” (p.2). Olsen found that neither long-term ELLs, their parents, nor the community realize that these students are in serious academic jeopardy. Gándara and Contreras (2009) explain that Latino parents often do not know what their children need to make it to and then in college.

Types of long-term ELLs.

Menken, Kleyn and Chae (2010) studied LTELS (Long-term English learners) in New York City and found that even among long-term ELLs there are differences. The four groups they describe include the vaivén students, students with inconsistent U.S. schooling, students, and the transitioning students. Below, I will briefly describe each sub-group.

Vaivén students.

Menken and her colleagues explain that vaivén ELLs move back and forth between the U.S. and their native country, they go (va) and come (ven). The researchers found that the majority of U.S. born long-term ELLs in New York have moved back and forth to their families’ countries of origin for sustained periods of time throughout their educational careers.

For the most part, vaivén students do not receive any English instruction when they are in their country of origin. These students usually have gaps in schooling as a result of their moving in or out of school systems. When they arrive in their native
country or a U.S. school, “a wide range of factors, such as age appropriateness and a students’ proficiency in the language of instruction, impact a school system’s decision about grade level and program placement” (Menken et al, 2010, p.11).

**Inconsistent U.S. schooling.**

Within the inconsistent schooling ELLs, Menken et al. (2010) identified four sub-categories. The first sub-category includes the school hoppers. The school hoppers are students who attend multiple schools and who therefore experience different and inconsistent programming. Students who are the children of migrant workers fall into this category. In the second group are students who experience programming differences from school to school due to differences in school’s language policies. Some of these students begin with one type of language support program in elementary school, are put into a different program for middle school, and still an altogether different kind of program in high school.

Subcategory three includes students who have received inconsistent language support programs within the same school. Menken et al. (2010) found that this is often due to shifts in their school’s language policy or uneven implementations of that policy in classrooms. Therefore, students may receive first language support at the beginning of their schooling, and ESL support or no support at all in later grades due to changes in the philosophy of educating ELLs of the school or district administrators. The fourth subcategory is the students who have experienced an absence of ELL programming altogether. Most of these students receive English-only instruction in mainstream classrooms for a period of one to three years.
Transitioning students.

The final category of long-term ELLs that Menken et al. (2010) describes is the transitioning students. The transitioning students are the most successful of the long-term ELLs. These students have developed native language literacy in their country of origin and are in the process of learning English. They are higher performing than other long-term ELLs. Menken et al. argue that transitional ELLs simply need additional time to develop sufficient English proficiency to pass state requirements and exit ELL status. Transitioning long-term ELLs have the same characteristics as the adequate formal schooling students discussed above.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify best practices for English language learners who have been in U.S. schools for seven years or longer. These students, referred to as long-term English learners, are not experiencing academic success. I was interested in exploring the effects of teaching academic concepts and vocabulary to 10th grade Hispanic long-term ELLs in a language arts class at a large, South Texas high school.

Significance

This study is significant because long-term English learners struggle with academic success, and educators need to find ways to support them. Olsen (2010) found that long-term ELLs are often frustrated and at the point of giving up as early as fifth grade. By high school, they are completely disengaged. Many long-term ELLs feel they are failures and do not see themselves belonging in school. Menken et al. (2010) state that long-term ELLs are “disproportionately represented in national rates of dropout and grade retention in the U.S.” (p.1). They go on to say that ELLs who take longer to exit
their ELL status are much more likely to experience academic failure than students who exit earlier.

Most secondary programs for ELLs are designed for newcomers (Olsen, 2010). In most programs for ELLs, students are placed in a sequence of classes depending on their English proficiency level. Many long-term ELLs stay in the intermediate or advanced level ELL classes because they continue to be unsuccessful on their English proficiency exam. Olsen (2010) explains that long-term ELLs often stay in these classes for years even though the classes do not meet their unique needs. On the other hand, because they often have a high level of oral English, some long-term ELLs are quickly placed into mainstream classes where they receive no support at all (Menken & Kleyn, 2010).

Olsen (2010) also argues that long-term ELLs are taught by teachers who are not prepared to meet their needs. She found that most secondary teachers who have these students in their classrooms are not prepared to teach reading and writing skills. Furthermore, they have not received training in language development. These teachers focus only on the academic content that needs to be taught for their subject matter. Unfortunately, classes with high levels of ELLs are usually assigned to the least prepared teachers in schools (Olsen, 2010). The findings from this study can be used in schools with similar student populations to assist educators in the development of the English language arts curriculum for long-term English learners.

**Research Question**

In this study, I looked at the academic language development of six long-term English learners. To carry out this study, I answered one main question and three sub-questions. The question and sub-questions are listed below.
Question: In what ways does teaching academic concepts and vocabulary in language arts to secondary long-term English learners impact their academic success on their assignments in their English language arts class? My sub-questions were:

1. What specific pedagogical structures for teaching academic concepts and vocabulary were used?
2. What were the students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures that were used?
3. How did the students’ work reflect their understanding of the academic concepts and the academic vocabulary that were taught?

Theoretical Underpinnings

BICS and CALP

Academic language differs from social or conversational language. Cummins (1984) has written about the differences between academic and conversational language. According to Cummins, there are two types of language proficiency. The first type is reflected in the ability to hold a conversation about everyday topics. The second involves talking, reading, and writing specifically about school subjects. In one of his key studies, Cummins examined four hundred special education referrals for ELLs in a large school system. Teachers who referred these students had assumed that since the students had adequate oral English, their lack of success with academic tasks was the result of a lack of cognitive ability rather than linguistic factors. Cummins’ argument was that these students did not have learning problems. Although they had developed conversational fluency or basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS), they had not yet developed cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP).
In order to help educators conceptualize the distinction between BICS and CALP, Cummins used quadrants (see Figure 1). Quadrant A represents language that is context embedded and cognitively undemanding. Examples of school activities that would go into this quadrant might include having students fill in the blanks in a poem about themselves and drawing pictures to represent the poem.

Quadrant C represents activities that are cognitively undemanding and context reduced. Activities that could go in this quadrant include writing a letter to a friend, and listening to daily announcements over the intercom. The next quadrant, quadrant D represents activities that are cognitively demanding and context reduced. Examples of activities in this quadrant are answering questions at the end of a chapter in a textbook, filling out worksheets on sentence structure, or answering multiple-choice questions on a standardized test. The quadrant that teachers of ELLs need to target is B. Quadrant B includes activities that are context embedded and cognitively demanding. Activities in this quadrant might include creating a “My Space” page for a character in a novel, making a poster with predictions for the future based on science fiction stories that students have read, and describing and illustrating the steps one needs to take to do something using signal words.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitively Undemanding</th>
<th>Cognitively Demanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students fill in blanks in a poem about themselves and draw pictures to illustrate the poem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a “My Space” page for a character in a novel Make predictions for the future based on science fiction stories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>text a friend or listen to the daily announcements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer end of chapter questions Answer multiple choice questions on a standardized test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Cummins Quadrants

Cummins (2008) explains that although the quadrants are useful as a guide for teachers, the two dimensions that form them cannot be specified in absolute terms. What may be context embedded or cognitively demanding for one student may not be so for another. This is a result of factors such as prior knowledge, experiences, or even interests. Even so, the quadrants can help teachers to understand the differences between the two types of language proficiency. By studying the types of language represented in the quadrants, educators are able to see the importance of building students’ background knowledge and organizing classroom activities in such a way that ELLs can better comprehend instruction.
Academic Language

Cummins (2008) developed the quadrants model to illustrate the differences between conversational and academic language. Other researchers have investigated different aspects of academic language. Meltzer and Hamann (2005), Corson (1997) and Gibbons (2009) discuss the academic language students need in order to experience academic success. Gibbons (2009) describes academic language or academic proficiency as the development of literacy within any subject in the school curriculum. She argues that the development of this literacy involves learning to control a new language, a language that is completely different than the language students’ use for everyday communication.

In part because of the content standards now widely used in United States schools, Meltzer and Hamann (2005) explain that students are now required to think, read, and write like historians, mathematicians, and historians. Meltzer and Hamann (2005) go on to say that academic language includes specialized vocabulary and grammatical patterns. It also takes into account the different genres particular to specific subjects. Different disciplines require different literacy skills. These include reading different types of texts and using different text structures, different presentation formats, and different ways of organizing language (Meltzer & Hamann, 2005).

Corson (1997) explains that the specific academic language of school subjects is especially challenging to English language learners since it is often used in culturally determined ways that are specific to a certain meaning system. For example, students in high school math and English classes would need to realize that words such as *figure* have different meanings in each subject. In an English class, *figure* could refer to a *figure*
of speech such as an idiom. In a math class, a *figure* could be a chart or graph that students might analyze. Corson argues that academic vocabulary development is one of the greatest challenges that adolescent ELLs face. Wessels (2011) states that “vocabulary knowledge is essential to student success” (p. 46).

**The Role of the First Language in Academic Language**

**Interdependence hypothesis.**

Cummins (1981) explains how first language development can influence the level of academic achievement of ELLs. When ELLs have the opportunity build academic language in their primary language, they can draw on what they know in their first language as they learn in English. Cummins’ (1981) interdependence hypothesis claims that concepts that are developed in the first language can transfer to the second language because there is a common underlying proficiency. Freeman and Freeman (2002) explain that students with adequate formal schooling have already developed the academic concepts of school subjects in their primary language. Therefore, recent immigrants with adequate formal schooling have a higher success rate than limited formal schooling students.

According to the interdependence hypothesis, students who come to school with a strong academic concepts in their primary language, will achieve at high levels of English in a relatively short time. Their task is to learn the English words to explain the concepts (Cummins, 2000).

**Common underlying proficiency.**

Cummins (2000) explains that there exists a common underlying proficiency (CUP) that can be thought of as the central processing system consisting of cognitive and
linguistic abilities such as memory, auditory discrimination, and abstract reasoning as well as specific conceptual and linguistic knowledge drawn from experience and learning. This CUP when developed in the first language can be drawn upon as students learn their second. He argues that for students learning a second language, the positive relationship between the two languages comes from three sources.

The first source is the application of the same cognitive and linguistic abilities and skills to the development of literacy in both languages. Second, there is the transfer of general concepts and knowledge; an individuals’ first language represents the foundation of schemata upon which second language acquisition is built. Finally, the third source focuses on the extent the languages are related, the transfer of specific linguistic features and skills across languages (Cummins, 2000). For ELLs, then, succeeding academically, can be directly related to their common underlying proficiency.

Threshold hypothesis.

Cummins (2000) also proposed the threshold hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, a child needs to achieve a certain level of proficiency or competence in their first or second language in order to take advantage of the benefits of bilingualism. According to Cummins (2000), if there is a low level of proficiency in both languages there may be negative cognitive consequences. He argues that when a person can develop linguistic and conceptual knowledge in their first language, they can more successfully add a second language and then develop bilingually.

According to the hypothesis, at the upper threshold, additive bilingualism occurs. New input is connected to learner’s previous knowledge including conceptual, linguistic, and learned knowledge (Cummins, 2000). Many long-term ELLs never achieved the
necessary proficiency in their first or second language. As a result, they have low levels of proficiency in both their first and second languages.

**Comprehensible input.**

Content teachers can assist ELLs in developing academic proficiency through scaffolding instruction. According to Freeman and Freeman (2009), many teachers simply focus on content knowledge rather than attending to both content and the academic language needed to comprehend and produce that content knowledge. However, if teachers scaffold the language and make the input comprehensible, there is more chance students will succeed.

“We acquire language and understand messages by obtaining comprehensible input” (Krashen 1996). According to Krashen, comprehensible input refers to messages, either oral or written, that can be understood by students. He explains that students acquire language when they receive input that is slightly beyond their current level. He refers to this as i+1 (input plus 1). He goes on to argue that if a student receives input that is below or at their level, there is nothing new to acquire. On the other hand, if the input is too far beyond their current level, it is not comprehensible.

Krashen (2004) also states that teaching at the i+1 level is not an exact science. He claims that teachers cannot possibly ensure that everything they say or write will be i+1 for every student since students in a classroom are at all different levels of proficiency. Regardless of this, as long as students understand most of what they hear and read in a new language, they will acquire that language.

One way to make input comprehensible is by scaffolding instruction (Freeman & Freeman, 2002; Vogt, Echevarria, & Short, 2010). Freeman and Freeman (2002) explain
that a scaffold supports a building during its construction. Similarly, teachers need to find different ways to support their students in their literacy development. When teachers are assisting students in developing literacy, some ways that they might scaffold the instruction include reading aloud to students, having students engage in daily writing, and allowing time for discussions (Freeman & Freeman, 2002). In this study, I explore how scaffolding the instruction supports the development of academic language in the language arts classroom.

**Limitations, Assumptions, and Controls**

This study was conducted with a small number of long-term ELLs over a short period of time. Participants were only exposed to a limited number of specific strategies to develop academic language for one semester. While students chosen for the study had similar backgrounds, which will be described, the researcher did not have control over the participants’ previous or concurrent school experiences.

It was assumed that the participants were honest when answering surveys and questionnaires. Only the researcher interpreted the data.

The instruments used in this study had been field-tested with students who were similar to the students who participated in the study.

**Definition of Key Terms**

There are two key terms that will be used throughout this study that are defined below.

**ELLs**

Batalova et al. (2007) explain that different states use different definitions to describe ELLs. In some states, ELLs are students who are eligible for language
instruction services. Others define ELLs as students who receive language instruction services because they do not meet a certain English proficiency level. Although the definitions all differ, all ELLs are students’ whose primary language is not English and who are learning English. García, Kleifgen, and Falchi (2008) explain that the No Child Left Behind act allows for flexibility in the definition of ELLs. According to that definition, ELLs are students who come to school speaking a language other than English and receive direct daily services or those who receive services and are being monitored based on their achievement on academic assessments. In this study, the researcher will assume these definitions when using the term ELL.

**Hispanic and Latino/a**

According to the U.S. Census (2010) Hispanics or Latinos are people who have classified themselves in one of the Spanish Hispanic, or Latino categories listed on the census. They were those who indicated that their origin was Mexican, Puerto Rican Cuban, Central or South American, or some other Hispanic origin. In this study, the words Hispanic and Latino will be used interchangeably when referring to people from Spanish speaking countries.

**Conclusion**

In the United States, 10.7 percent of the K-12 school population consists of ELLs (Migration Policy Institute, 2010). The largest number of ELLs are moving into secondary schools. Unfortunately, these students are not experiencing academic success (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2010). Many of these secondary ELL students have been in the U.S. for seven years or longer. Researchers have found that teaching these long-term
ELLs the academic language of school will help them to achieve academic success ((Cummins, 1981, 2008).

In this study, I examined the effects of teaching long-term ELLs the academic concepts and vocabulary of language arts by providing a series of lessons that gave students the opportunity to work with the academic vocabulary and concepts of language arts. I will describe the lessons and report on how the academic concepts and vocabulary were reflected in the students’ work. Findings from this study will assist educators in the development and teaching of strategies for the English language arts curriculum designed to increase the academic language proficiency of long-term ELLs.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The pursuit and promise of educational opportunity has historically been central in the path towards inclusion and a better life by groups in the United States who are struggling against forces of poverty, racism and prejudice. (Olsen, 2010, p. iii).

Gándara and Contreras (2009) argue that while Latinos are the largest and most rapidly growing ethnic minority in the U.S., they are not succeeding in schools. In fact, Latinos are lagging dangerously behind. There are many reasons they struggle in school, but one is that many enter school with a language other than English. Although numbers change daily, English language learners (ELLs) make up about 45 percent of the Latino population (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

While the majority of ELLs are found in elementary schools, an alarming number of these students are entering secondary schools. Most secondary schools group all ELLs into one category without realizing that they come with a variety of backgrounds and educational experiences (Freeman & Freeman, 2002; Olsen, 2010).

The largest group of secondary ELLs have been in the U.S. for seven or more years. These learners often come with complex linguistic and academic issues (Olsen, 2010). There exists very little research about this group known as the long-term English learners (Freeman & Freeman; 2009, Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2010; Olsen, 2010). In fact, 59% of secondary English language learners are long-term English learners (Olsen, 2010). This study will specifically be focused on secondary long-term Latino ELLs and will look at ways to promote their success in U.S. schools.
This literature review begins with a general overview of ELLs in U.S. schools including a detailed description of the learners that will be the focus of this study, the long-term ELLs. The research that shows why long-term ELLs are struggling academically will be discussed. Next, the keys for success for language minority students and the characteristics of effective schools for ELLs will be reviewed. This will be followed by a description of effective schooling practices for ELLs and effective schooling practices for long-term English language learners in particular.

ELLs face many challenges related to adolescent literacy and the literature related to this will be reviewed. This review will conclude with a discussion of academic language and will include what it is, who needs it, and how it can be applied in the English language arts classroom.

Who Are English Language Learners?

Batalova, Fix, and Murray (2007) argue that because of the growing diversity in U.S. schools, the demands of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and an increased demand for a skilled workforce, there are a number of important questions that have risen to the surface. These questions include:

Who are immigrant students and students who do not speak English well? Where are they from? What is their family background (social, economic, linguistic, etc.)? How well do they do in school? Are they developing the literacy needed to take part in higher education and a skilled workforce? (p. 18)

When discussing students who have come from other countries and are in the process of learning English, different terms are used. García (2009) argues that students learning a second language should be referred to as emergent bilinguals. She believes that
instead describing these learners with a term that implies they have a limitation such as with the term limited English proficient, or focusing only on the target language as the term *English language learners* does, students should be considered emergent bilinguals. This term suggests that the students are proficient in one language and are in the process of becoming proficient in another. Therefore, they are emerging into bilingualism (García, 2009). Although the term has not yet become widely used, it may be seen in research and reports relating to this population in the near future. While most of the research and reports relating to this population use the term ELL, government reports use LEP (limited English proficient). Since LEP has a more negative connotation, I will use the term ELL in this study.

The term English language learner or ELL refers to students whose first language is not English. This definition encompasses both students who are just beginning to learn English as well as those who have already developed English language proficiency (LaCelle-Peterson & Rivera, 1994).

Different states use different definitions for determining how ELLs are identified (Bartalova et al, 2007). In some states, ELLs are students who are eligible for language instruction services. Others define ELLs as students who receive language instruction services and who do not meet a certain English proficiency level.

Not all ELLs are immigrants. While the majority of ELLs are foreign born (34.6 %), there are also a large number of ELLs who were born in the U.S. Second generation ELLs make up 11.9% of the students while third generation only consists of 1.9 %. At the national level, 57 % of ELLs are U.S. born children (Bartalova et al, 2007). Thomas and Collier (1997) predict that by the year 2020, at least 50% of school aged
children will be of non-Euro-American background and by the year 2030, language minority and African American students will be the majority in U.S. schools.

Although at this time the largest group of ELLs are in the elementary schools, they are quickly moving into the middle and high schools where “there are typically fewer resources available to address ELL students’ needs” (Bartalova et al, p. 23). An additional problem involves understanding the students themselves. Freeman and Freeman (2002) explain that the different types of ELLs in secondary schools are not often recognized. Educators tend to put all ELLs into one category. Programs that are designed to help these students are based on the assumption that all ELLs are alike. Freeman and Freeman argue that there are three groups of ELLs in U.S. schools. Below each of these three groups, the newly arrived with adequate formal schooling, the newly arrived with limited formal schooling, and the long-term ELLs will be described.

**Newly Arrived with Adequate Formal Schooling**

The first group of ELLs, the newly arrived with adequate formal schooling, have had schooling in their native country and are entering into U.S. schools with a high level of literacy and cognitive development in their native language. These students have often been taught some English in their native country. Once they acquire oral proficiency in English, they can transfer what they have learned in their native language to their English learning. These are students who have been in the United States for five years or less. They come to the United States at grade level in their native language. Since these students have learned the subject area concepts, they soon catch up to their English-speaking peers. Although their transition into U.S. schools is faster than that of other types of English learners (Olsen, 2010), they may struggle for some time with
standardized tests.

**Newly Arrived with Limited Formal Schooling**

The second type of ELLs described by Freeman and Freeman (2002) are the newly arrived with limited formal schooling. Like the newly arrived with adequate formal schooling, these students have been in the United States for five years or less. One difference is that these learners are not up to grade level in their native language. This can be a result of many different factors. Sometimes these students have had interrupted schooling because they have lived in communities where schooling was not always available. Other limited schooling students come from rural communities where the schools do not provide the level of education that they need in order to be at the level of students in U.S. schools (Freeman & Freeman, 2002). While these students have needs that are obvious to educators, the largest group of ELLs, the long-term English learners, is the group that is probably the least understood and often not recognized (Walsh, 1991).

**Long–Term English Language Learners**

Menken et al. (2010) define long-term ELLs as students who have attended U.S. schools for seven or more years and whose prior schooling has been linguistically subtractive because their native language was not fully developed in school and instead, was replaced by English. Long-term ELL’s are usually below grade level in reading, writing and often math as well. In fact, Olsen (2010) states that, “a definitional characteristic of Long-Term English Learners is that they are not doing well academically” (p.21). In some cases, they have adequate grades, which gives them a false perception of their academic achievement. Their low level of academic achievement can be seen through their low-test scores (Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Olsen, 2010). Most
long–term ELLs had some bilingual instruction early on but were not in any consistent program. Although these students have oral English skills, they do not have the necessary academic proficiency needed to be at the same level as their native English-speaking peers.

**Types of long-term ELLs.**

Menken et al. (2010) identify three main groups of long-term ELLs. These include the *vaivén* students, those with inconsistent schooling, and the transitioning ELLs (See Table 1).

Table 1

*Types of Long-Term ELLs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaivén</th>
<th>Inconsistent Schooling</th>
<th>Transitioning</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students move back and forth between the U.S. and country of origin.</td>
<td>Sub Categories 1. School hoppers 2. Programming differences from school to school 3. Inconsistent programs within the same school 4. The absence of ELL programming altogether</td>
<td>Students have developed native language literacy in their country of origin and are in the process of learning English.</td>
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*Vaivén.*

The first group identified by Menken et al are the *vaivén* students. These long-term ELLs move back and forth between the U.S. and their country of origin. In fact, the majority of U.S. born long-term ELLs have moved back and forth to their family’s country of origin for sustained periods of time throughout their educational careers. The frequent moving makes academic success difficult for these students since they are not experiencing any consistency in their schooling.
Inconsistent schooling.

The second group of long-term ELLs is the inconsistent schooling students. This group has four subcategories.

School hoppers are students that have attended multiple schools. Since these students have attended multiple schools they experience different and inconsistent programming. The second sub-category includes the students who experience programming differences from school to school. Due to differences in each school’s language policies, some long-term ELLs begin with one type of program in elementary school, a different program in middle school, and still an altogether different program in high school. For example, an ELL might be in a bilingual education program in kindergarten and then move to an English only school. The third sub-category includes students who have received inconsistent programs within the same school. This can be due to shifts in their school’s language policy or uneven implementation of that policy in classrooms. For example, a school might have a transitional program one year and then a bilingual program another.

The fourth category of long-term ELLs is the students who have experienced an absence of ELL programming altogether. Most of these students receive English-only programming in mainstream classrooms for a period of one to three years since many schools have no resources for supporting ELLs (García and Godina, 2004).

Transitioning students.

The third category of long-term ELLs is the transitioning students. Menken et al. (2010) explain that these students are usually the most successful of the long-term ELLs. Transitional long-term ELLs have developed native language literacy in their native
country and are in the process of learning English. As a group, transitioning students are higher performing than other long-term ELLs because they have usually come with prior schooling. These students can build on their prior education as well as transfer the knowledge they have (Freeman & Freeman, 2002). The researchers explain that they simply need additional time to develop sufficient English proficiency to pass state requirements and exit ELL status. Researchers have begun look at long-term ELLs as a group because they “demonstrate some of the lowest performance of any student group” (Olsen, 2010). Long-term ELLs have become the largest group and their lack of academic success is impacting schools in general.

**Why long-term ELLs struggle academically.**

One of the characteristics of long-term ELLs is that they are not academically successful (Olsen, 2010). According to Olsen, by eighth grade, long-term ELLs demonstrate the lowest performance of any student group. There are a number of reasons that these learners struggle academically. These reasons include inconsistent programs, weak programs, and watered down curriculum.

Olsen (2010) explains that long-term ELLs have distinct language issues. While they are struggling with the same academic language of school that standard-English learners must learn as well, they are still acquiring basic English syntax, grammar, and vocabulary. Long-term ELLs also have significant gaps in reading and writing (Short & Fitzimmons, 2007; Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Olsen, 2010).

The gaps vary depending on how long students stay in a specific language learning setting. Students with inconsistencies in their language learning had lower academic
success. Menken et al. (2010) and Olsen (2010) argue that English only programs or weak bilingual programs are the principal cause of their limited literacy skills. Krashen (1996) agrees saying that “programs designed along principles hypothesized to underlie ideal bilingual programs were more effective” (p. 10).

Since many long-term ELLs are well behaved in school, teachers sometimes pass them from one grade to the next even though they are not academically ready (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). Many times, the teachers of long-term ELLs water down the curriculum and do not give students what they need in order for them to reach the academic levels of their standard-English speaking peers (Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Menken et al., 2010; Olsen, 2010). As a result, although the majority of long-term ELLs want to go to college, they are not academically prepared (Olsen). By the final years of high school, many long-term ELLs have become discouraged and disengaged in school. They no longer see themselves belonging in an academic setting and drop out (Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Olsen, 2010). Different researchers have made recommendations for helping language minority students succeed in school. These recommendations are useful for long-term ELLs.

**Factors that lead to low academic achievement.**

While some of the reasons that long-term ELLs are struggling have been explained, it is important to examine why language minority students overall have not been succeeding in schools. Research on education and achievement has brought to the forefront several areas in which schools and communities can change the course of academic achievement for Latinos as well as all minority groups in the U.S. (Gándara & Contereras, 2009).
The first area is early and continuing cognitive enrichment. The authors claim that early educational intervention, if it is sustained over time, can have a positive impact on the intellectual development of children. Second, ELLs are often segregated into schools where most students do not speak English as their native language. When students do not have role models who speak English, it is more difficult for them to learn the language.

Where students live and go to school makes a difference in school success (García et al., 2004). Inequities in housing policies are a “vicious cycle that traps families into intergenerational inequality because housing is so closely connected to quality of schools and quality of schooling is so closely connected to future economic opportunity” (Gándara & Contreras, p.313). Suárez-Orozco, Suárez -Orozco and Todorova (2008) found that ELLs often attend the worst schools, schools that are “deprived of resources and plagued by conflict” (p. 228). In these schools, language minority students reported the least academic success. Gándara and Contreras (2009) recommend that language minority students be assigned to schools that will give them the opportunity to break that cycle of poor schooling and limited opportunity.

Gándara and Contreras (2009) argue that another factor that affects minority student achievement is a child’s physical and emotional health. If students are not mentally or physically well, it is difficult for them to focus at school. Often, they even miss school and fall behind their peers. The authors recommend integrated health services for low-income students through cooperative agreements between schools, county, and regional health agencies. These types of services can have positive effects on children’s physical and mental well-being.

The fourth area involves recruiting and preparing extraordinary teachers. Many
teachers are not prepared to work with language minority students. These teachers do not have the support, or strategies necessary to meet the needs of these students (Olsen, 2010). Gándara and Contreras (2009) believe that the single most critical resource in any school is the teacher. Schools serving ELLs need teachers who not only know how to meet the needs of the students academically but who can understand and can communicate with students as well as their families. They argue that teachers should be recruited from the student’s own communities.

Curriculum planning that focuses on the needs of ELLs is important for their academic success. García and Godina (2004), Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008), Horwitz et al. (2009), and Olsen (2010) found that few school districts have developed coherent programs of instruction at the middle and high school levels to address the needs of ELLs. These students are placed together in the same classroom even though their previous educational experiences and literacy levels are dramatically different.

For example, Menken et al. (2009) found that long-term ELLs were either placed in mainstream classes or newcomer programs—neither of which would meet their needs. Mainstream classes do not meet the needs of these students since mainstream teachers are not trained to understand the supports that English learners need such as instruction focused on the academic language of each subject area (Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Olsen, 2010). Long-term English learners in most cases have already developed social English. Therefore, Newcomer classes that focus on developing social language would not be appropriate for long-term ELLs either.

Gándara and Contreras (2009) argue that another reason that ELLs are not academically successful is that they are placed in programs that have an English-only
outlook. An English only outlook fails to capitalize on the social and cognitive advantages that bilinguals have. Schools with English only programs cause students to fall behind academically as they are learning English. In addition, students in English only programs do not get a chance to develop their native language. This often results in their losing that language, especially the academic language.

Menken and Kleyn (2009) discovered that decisions that are made regarding bilingual education programs are “deeply intertwined with the status of each language and its speakers within international and local sociolinguistic hierarchies” (p.4). Gándara and Contreras found that many schools view student’s native language as an impediment to learning. Krashen (1996) and Freeman and Freeman (2011) explain that when students are provided native language support, they gain knowledge of the world as well as subject matter knowledge. This knowledge helps make subject matter knowledge in English comprehensible.

A lack of support for preparing for college is another factor that influences ELLs (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Many ELLs and their parents have very little understanding of what is necessary to prepare for college. College preparation and support programs are the huge area of need. Olsen (2010) writes that ELLs, specifically long-term ELLs want to go to college and yet they are unaware that their “academic skills, academic record and the courses they are taking are not preparing them to reach that goal” (p. 25). She goes on to say that even parents do not understand that these learners are in academic jeopardy and that college is not within their reach.

Olsen (2010) as well as Gándara and Contreras (2009) argue for an overall school climate that sends ELL students the message that going to college is important. If
these programs were embedded into the routines of schooling rather than being add-ons, they would be more effective. Gándara and Contreras (2009) found that language minority students generally begin to participate in these programs when it is too late.

Finally, the costs and benefits of educating language minority students must be considered. Gándara and Contreras (2009) believe that there must be a constant investment of public funds in order to keep students on a successful pathway toward college completion. The authors argue that there needs to be a true understanding of the costs and benefits of increasing the numbers of language minority students completing college.

**Characteristics of Effective Schools for ELLs**

While Gándara and Contreras (2009) provide the big picture of why ELLs are not experiencing academic success, Lucas, Henze, and Donato (1990) looked specifically at high schools where ELLs were successful. Their goal was to find out what was contributing to the success of adolescent ELLs at the schools. They studied six high schools in California and Arizona with high numbers of ELLs and described the features they found that contributed to their success. Their findings included eight features which they considered to be the most important in promoting the success of ELLs at all six schools. These findings are consistent with the findings of Gándara and Contreras (2009), García and Godina (2004), Menken and Kleyn, (2009), Olsen (2010) and Thomas and Collier (1997) (2009). These schools:

- Valued students’ languages and cultures
- Held high expectations for all ELLs
- Made the education of ELLs a priority
· Provided staff development in order to serve ELLs effectively
· Offered a variety of courses for ELLs
· Had counseling programs that gave ELLs special attention
· Had high levels of parent involvement
· Showed a strong commitment by the staff to empower language minority students through education

The first feature is that value is placed on the students’ languages and cultures. Valuing students’ language and culture has been the focus of research on ELLs (Cummins, 2007; Freeman & Freeman, 2010; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; García, et al., 2009; Krashen, 2007). Research has shown that one of the keys to success for language minority children is that all stakeholders see students’ native language and culture as an advantage. Cummins (1996) calls this an intercultural orientation. Schools that take an intercultural orientation value the use of students’ primary language and culture.

In successful schools, all teachers and administrators give ELLs the message that their language and culture are valued and respected. This is done in a variety of ways including treating their native language as an advantage and making an effort to learn the students’ native language. The schools also offer classes to help students continue to develop their native language. Successful schools also find many ways to consistently affirm the customs, values, and holidays of the ELLs native countries.

Gándara and Contreras (2009) found that through strong bilingual education programs, language minority students would have the opportunity to continue to develop their native language and English language literacy. Baker (2006) makes the case that learning a second language has been viewed as having general educational and academic
value. He states that learning a new language has been “defended as a way of sharpening the mind and developing the intellect” (p.124).

A second feature is that successful schools have is that they hold high expectations for ELLs. Olsen (2010) argues that ELLs who experience academic achievement are “placed in rigorous, college preparation courses” (p. 35). In the successful schools that Lucas et al. (1990) studied, there were many ways this was done. Efforts were made to hire minority staff into leadership positions so that the students could have role models. In addition, there were special programs offered for preparing ELLs for college. The schools offered advanced and honors bilingual and sheltered classes.

Next, school leaders should make the education of ELLs a priority. School staff should be trained in the latest instructional and curricular approaches to teaching ELLs. School leaders focused on strengthening the curriculum and instruction for all students, including ELLs (García et al., 2009). Horwitz et al. (2009) explain that school leadership is an essential key to the success of ELLs. They found that in successful schools for ELLs, school leaders were knowledgeable of ELL needs and were advocates for ELL students.

The fourth feature, staff development, needs to be incorporated to help teachers and other staff to serve ELLs effectively. In the Lucas et al study they found that compensation was given so that school staff would take advantage of professional development opportunities. The trainings included all different aspects of working with language minority students such as effective instructional practices, principles in second language acquisition, and cross cultural communication.
Horwitz et al. (2009) also found that in successful schools for ELLs, there was comprehensive planning and adoption of language development strategies for ELLs. There was a particular emphasis on improving reading and literacy for all students. The researchers found that in the most successful schools, teachers and administrators worked together to develop a plan for how to best serve the ELL students.

Effective schools offer a variety of courses for ELLs. At these schools, school leaders insured that the course offerings for ELLs did not limit their choices or place them into low-level classes. Menken et al. (2010) and Suarez-Orozco et al. (2008) emphasize the importance of a culture of high expectations and a focus on achievement for ELLs in schools. In addition, Lucas et al. (1990) explained that in successful schools, class sizes were kept small and academic support systems were in place to help ELLs transition into mainstream classes.

All six schools in the Lucas et al. study had counseling programs that paid special attention to ELLs. Counselors spoke the students’ native language and were often from the same cultural background. The counselors were well informed about post secondary opportunities that were available to ELLs and they consistently monitored their academic success. Olsen (2010) and Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) report that schools with successful ELLs have counselors who arrange the master schedule in order to facilitate the progress of ELL students through the school system. This includes working with the students to fill in the gaps of classes they are missing as well as placing them in classes where they will receive the support they need.

Gándara and Contreras (2009) and Olsen (2010) argue for an overall school climate that sends ELL students the message that going to college is important. If these
programs were embedded into the routines of schooling rather than being add-ons, they would be more effective. One program that is integrated into many schools with the purpose of preparing ELLs for college is AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination). The mission of AVID is to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college.

Parent involvement can be key to the success for ELLs. When parents are encouraged to become involved in their children’s education, ELLs have more chance for success. Schools in the Lucas study held ESL classes for the parents and had monthly parent’s night. Parents were involved with the counselors in planning student’s courses. School staff made an effort to meet with parents whenever it was most convenient for them. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) report that ELL students with the highest success rates had parents with high expectations for their success. The researchers explain that because of cultural differences, many immigrant parents do not attempt to become involved in their child’s school community. They trust that educators know what is best for their children. Suárez-Orozco et al. explain that it is important for teachers and other school leaders to understand these cultural differences.

The final feature of the Lucas study is that staff members shared a strong commitment to empower language minority students through education. Students in the schools in their study were encouraged to take part in political processes that challenge the status quo. Staff members reached out to ELL students in ways that went beyond their job requirements. For example, many staff members sponsored extra curricular activities. The staff also participated in community activities in which they were advocates for minorities. While Suarez-Orozco et al. (2008) found that students in “toxic schools” had
teachers who did not believe in them or their potential, Olsen (2010) argues that successful schools for ELLs help students to develop healthy identities. This is done through building a school climate that empowers language minority students.

Gándara and Contreras (2009), García and Godina (2004), Horwitz et al. (2009), Lucas et al. (1990), Olsen (2010), and Suarez-Orozco et al. (2008), have identified what unsuccessful schools need and what successful schools have done.

Taking into account all of the research on the educational needs of adolescent ELLs at the school level, it is also necessary to look at what specifically can be done in classrooms to promote their success.

**Keys for the Academic Success of ELLs**

Thomas and Collier (1997) researched school effectiveness for language minority students. Their research included five large urban school districts in various parts of the U.S. where there were large numbers of ELLs. Through their findings they made predictions about the long-term achievement of ELLs as a result of a variety of instructional practices.

The researchers found three key predictors of academic success (Thomas & Collier, 1997). The first predictor is cognitively complex on grade level academic instruction through students’ first language as long as possible. Cummins (2008) and Baker (2006) found that parents who enroll their children in bilingual programs reported that their children benefit from the academic work in both languages. These researchers found that students in well-implemented bilingual programs do better than their counterparts being educated in well-implemented monolingual classes.

The second predictor of academic success for ELLs is the use of current
approaches to teaching the academic curriculum through two languages. Thomas and Collier (1997) and Freeman and Freeman (2002) describe these current approaches to include cooperative learning, thematic units, and drawing on students’ interest and backgrounds.

The third key listed is a transformed sociocultural context for ELL schooling. Thomas and Collier explain that the instructional goal should be to create for the ELL student the same type of supportive sociocultural context for learning in two languages that monolingual learners benefit from. Teachers should scaffold the instruction by using a variety of strategies with the students (Freeman & Freeman, 2002).

The research tells educators how to meet the needs of ELLs in general. In the following section, I will look specifically at meeting the needs of one type of ELL, the long-term English learner

**Educational Needs and Practices for Long-Term English Learners**

Although the research on effective schooling applies to all ELLs, long-term ELLs have specific characteristics that require educators to understand who they are and what they need. Freeman & Freeman (2009), Menken et al. (2009), and Olsen (2010), all mention that very little research exists on effective educational practices for long-term ELLs.

Menken et al. (2009) and Menken and Kleyn (2010) argue that while long-term ELLs have oral language proficiency in both their native language as well as in English, they have limited literacy skills in English and their native language. The researchers describe the education these learners receive as subtractive since their literacy development is usually in English only. As Freeman and Freeman (2002), Menken et al.
(2009), Menken and Kleyn (2010) and Olsen (2010), explain, many long-term ELLs were in bilingual programs at some time during their education but it is likely that the programs were weak. Not only were the programs weak, they also were not consistent. Menken et al. (2009) state that their schooling was “interspersed with sustained periods of attaining English only programs” (p.6).

Menken et al. (2009) did a case study of 29 long-term ELLs in three New York high schools for three years. The study included interviews with teachers, students, and administrators, an analysis of academic records and grades in students’ language arts and math classes. Based on the data collected by Menken et al. (2009), the researchers were able to make recommendations for improving the educational experiences and success of long-term ELLs. Students should have developed their first languages, and teachers should receive specific training on how to support them.

Their first recommendation is that ELLs to have the opportunity to fully develop their native language literacy. Through their study, Menken et al. (2009) and Menken and Kleyn (2010) found that students who had developed their native language literacy as well as English literacy were very successful in school. On the other hand, students who were in transitional programs where they had not had the opportunity to develop their native language proficiency had a very difficult time developing their English language proficiency. These students continually struggled academically. Olsen (2010) also recommends that schools need to implement mechanisms to support student’s native language as well as their English language development.

The second recommendation that Menken et al. (2009) and Menken and Kleyn (2010) make is that high school teachers should be prepared to teach long-term ELLs the
academic literacy skills they need. These students need specific literacy skills instruction in each subject matter course (Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Menken et al.; Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Olsen, 2010). For example, in English language arts classes, students need to be taught the specific language of story elements such as protagonist, antagonist, and setting. The researchers noted that in successful schools, teachers in areas such as math, science, and social studies were addressing literacy in their instruction. Included in their recommendation, Menken and Kleyn (2009, 2010) state that long-term ELLs should be placed not into ESL courses but rather English language arts courses that focus on increasing students’ academic literacy skills in English.

Along with their recommendations, Menken et al. (2010) argue that given the large numbers of long-term ELLs currently enrolled in secondary schools, it is “imperative that we seek to improve educational opportunities provided to these students through expanded research and improved practices” (p. 16). Along with the above recommendations, long-term ELLs will also benefit from having teachers who understand and put into practice different pedagogical structures.

**Pedagogical Structures**

**The Zone of Proximal Development**

To best understand what pedagogical structures are most effective for all learners, it is important to understand the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) proposed by Vygotsky (1978) as a key to his social theory of learning. According Vygotsky, learning should occur in a student’s ZPD. Vygotsky (1978) defines the ZPD as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem
Vygotsky (1978) writes that one way that learning occurs is when we interact with others—adults or more advanced peers when we are in the process of learning something. The ZPD is when the learning that a student is exposed to is just beyond what he or she can currently do. It is important that teachers aim instruction in this zone. According to Vygotsky, teachers or peers mediate the learning by helping students make sense of what they are learning. When working in the students’ ZPD, a teacher should ask questions, or point out important information. One way that teachers can mediate is by using a structured approach to teaching.

**A Structured Approach to Teaching**

Fisher and Frey (2009) have developed a structured approach to teaching based on a gradual release of responsibility model of comprehension instruction (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983). In a gradual release model, the teacher begins by providing a great deal of support through a structure such as teacher modeling. Then, the teacher gradually shifts the responsibility to the students by involving them in group work, and class discussions. As time goes by, the teacher gives more and more responsibility to the students so that eventually, they will be able to work independently. The researchers emphasize a recursive cycle that includes modeling, whole class group activities, small group coaching, and individual practice. Each of these is geared toward helping students become independent learners. Structured teaching includes the focus lesson, guided instruction, collaborative learning, and independent learning.

Fisher and Frey (2009) begin by explaining that in the focus lesson, the teacher introduces the purpose of the lesson and then models what he/she wants the students’ to
do. Specifically, the teacher models the actions and processes that they want the students to do. This can be done by thinking aloud so that students have the opportunity to see how the teacher draws on her background knowledge in order to solve a problem. When students are exposed to this thinking aloud, they are able to share the students’ consciousness.

Next, the researchers explain that students are given more responsibility as they apply their own background knowledge and new learning to tasks. When students do this, the teacher is close by to help scaffold students’ understanding by helping them when they are having trouble. In some cases, they might need to assist the student in assessing the relevant background knowledge they need.

From there Fisher and Frey (2009) argue that students should be provided the opportunity to work with one another as they clarify their understanding of the task at hand. Students work in small groups to complete an assignment designed to merge background knowledge with new meaning. This group work should be productive and include both individual and group accountability.

Finally, learners will be able to utilize all of their resources to complete a task designed to reinforce something they have already been learning about. When this is done, new learning can become a part of the student’s background knowledge. Fisher and Frey (2009) explain that during this phase, students also continue to build background knowledge. This is especially true when they engage in activities such as sustained silent reading or independent reading. Fisher and Frey explain that each phase of instruction “includes opportunities to activate, build, and apply background knowledge” (p.22).

Teacher Modeling

Freeman and Freeman (2011) explain that good instruction supports learning
for as long as the student needs it and then supports the student as he or she begins to work independently. One way teachers can mediate student learning is by modeling. Freeman and Freeman write that teachers can do modeling with individual students, small groups, or an entire class.

Fisher and Frey (2009) state that teacher modeling is “a powerful way to engage students in learning” (p. 97). They go on to say that when teachers model, students get an example of thinking and hear vocabulary involved in tasks. Modeling is an effective way to teach reading comprehension, writing, and problem solving. Fisher and Frey explain that when teachers model, they demonstrate important tools such as how to utilize text features and text structures in order to comprehend a text.

Modeling provides teachers with the opportunity to build students’ background knowledge. Alfassi (2004) conducted two studies with more than three hundred ninth and tenth graders. They focused on lessons that included reciprocal teaching, a procedure where four students read and discussed a text framed by four processes: questioning, clarifying, summarizing and predicting. Teachers in the study modeled their own comprehension with think-alouds. Alfassi found that the combination of the reciprocal teaching and the teacher modeling resulted in gains on measures of reading achievement.

**Scaffolding**

**Visual and verbal scaffolds.**

Another type of mediation is scaffolding. Bruner (1985) referred to learning that takes place when an adult or more advanced peer points out a problem or makes suggestions as verbal scaffolds. According to Cazden (1992) a scaffold is “a temporary framework for construction in progress” (p.103). Verbal scaffolds can help to facilitate
guided discussion. In addition to providing verbal scaffolds, teachers can also provide visual scaffolds. Visual scaffolds include graphic organizers, maps, charts, and timelines. According to Gottlieb (2006) visual support is a very important component of teaching English learners. She goes on to say that visual or graphic support should be used for a number of reasons because they “provide multiple avenues for assessing content, constructing meaning, and communicating ideas” (p.134).

Cooperative Learning

Marzano (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of studies on cooperative learning. He found that cooperative learning has an effect size of .73 when compared with instructional strategies in which students work on tasks individually. One of the most commonly cited studies is by Johnson and Johnson (1981). In the study, the researchers contrasted cooperative learning with intergroup competition and individual competition. They found that cooperative learning groups had an effect size of .78 when compared with strategies in which students participated in individual competition. Cooperative learning also had an effect size of .78 when it was compared with instructional strategies in which students worked on tasks individually without competing with one another. Therefore, when students participated in cooperative learning rather than intergroup competition, individual competition, or independent work, they were more successful.

Johnson and Johnson (1999) argue that effective groups have five critical features that include:

1. Interpersonal and small group skills
2. Group processing
3. Positive interdependence
4. Face to face promotive interaction

5. Individual and group accountability.

**Partner Work**

Teachers can also scaffold instruction by having students work in partners (Freeman & Freeman, 2011). In many cases, teachers with English learners have students work with partners. They often partner less proficient students with more proficient students. The student who is more proficient helps scaffold the instruction for the less proficient student. Freeman and Freeman write that scaffolds such as grouping supports learners by “providing a structure they can rely on to build their competence (p.85).

**Independent Learning**

Fisher and Frey (2009) believe that the main reason that teachers should use different pedagogical structures is to prepare students to work independently. They explain that learners utilize all of their resources to complete a task. The task is designed to reinforce an action or process in order to develop fluency and automaticity so that whatever the student is learning will become part of their background knowledge. Students can draw on this knowledge in order to solve challenges.

**Adolescent Literacy for English Language Learners**

Experts have debated over the definition of adolescent literacy. Researchers argue that the term *literacy* relates primarily to elementary students since they are the ones learning to read and write (King-Shaver & Hunter, 2009). More recently, educational experts have turned their attention toward adolescent learners and their development of literacy.

While some reports on adolescent literacy focus only on reading, others
broaden the definition to include reading, writing, and other modes of symbolic communication (King-Shaver & Hunter, 2009). Literacy is an individual’s ability to make, create, and communicate meaning in many forms including written texts, mathematical symbols, and all forms of the arts. Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, and Morris (2008) agree that the term adolescent literacy is complex. They explain that the different interpretations of what adolescent literacy refers to results from the fact that young people and their literacy practices are so different from one another.

When considering the different interpretations of adolescent literacy as well as the differences in adolescents, Daniels and Zemelman (2004) found that literacy can be developed when adolescents read the kinds of materials real adult readers do—including “a wide range of text, fiction and non fiction, articles and books, paper and electronic informational and poetic, in a wide range of genres” (p. 248).

In order to be successful in high school, adolescent ELLs need literacy skills to work with the materials that Daniels and Zemelman (2004) describe. Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) state that according to the 2000 Census, 1.5 adolescent ELLs in grades 6-12 have not developed the skills necessary for academic success. The researchers argue that adolescent ELLs are faced with double the work since they must learn academic English and all the core content topics. They believe that if these learners are provided with consistent, effective programs and effective materials, they can experience school success. Unfortunately, ELLs are usually provided with both programs and materials that are not effective (Short and Fitzsimmons, 2007).

Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) argue that one reason that students are performing at such low levels is that they are not “explicitly taught sophisticated genres, specialized
language conventions, disciplinary norms of conventions, disciplinary norms of precision and accuracy, and higher-level interpretive processes” (p.43). Moje (2008) refers to this specialized language as disciplinary literacy. According to Moje, disciplinary literacy refers to literacy skills required of practitioners in a content field. Shanahan and Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) argue that in order to achieve a more sophisticated literacy development, there is a need to inform educators about what a more advanced literacy curriculum might be and determine how it could be implemented.

In order to show need for a more advanced literacy curriculum, Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) created a pyramid that illustrates their perspective on how the development of literacy progresses. (See Figure 2)

![Literacy Development Pyramid]

*Figure 2. Literacy Development Pyramid*

The base of the pyramid represents the basic skills that are involved in most of all reading tasks. This level represents basic literacy. These skills include decoding, understanding various print and literacy conventions, the recognition of high frequency words, and basic fluency routines such as responding appropriately to basic punctuation. These are skills are related directly to background knowledge (Marzano, 2004) and can
be developed during the primary grades. The majority of students are able to develop them before they enter school.

In the upper elementary grades, students are in the intermediate stage so they begin to have more sophisticated reading routines and responses. They develop the skills that allow them to decode multisyllabic words quickly and easily. Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) explain that reading comprehension depends on knowing 90-95% of words in a text. Students with better vocabularies also tend to be more successful on standardized tests. Adolescent ELLs need to be instructed in learning word awareness strategies and in cognate recognition use (Daniels & Zemelman, 2004; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

At the intermediate stage, Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) explain that students are able to respond with automaticity to words that do not appear with high frequency in text. They also learn to interpret and respond to less common forms of punctuation and know the meaning of higher-level vocabulary words.

Corson (1997) also found that high school grades as well as college entrance exams such as the SAT are largely dependent on exams with Greco-Latin vocabulary and are a big factor in keeping students who have not been exposed to this type of vocabulary from being successful. This happens because a much more differentiated vocabulary is available to some groups of children and not others. Corson explains that children from educated families and communities are exposed to vocabulary that is closer to the vocabulary used in schools. When they enter school, they are often placed in higher level classes where they continue to be exposed to this vocabulary while students from lower socioeconomic groups are placed in lower level classes that do not tend to provide...
exposure to this vocabulary. He argues that the children from lower socio economic
groups need to be provided rich linguistic experiences in school

Along with the exposure to the academic vocabulary needed for school success, 
students at the intermediate level are able to monitor their own comprehension and know strategies to apply when comprehension is not occurring (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Although most students gain mastery of these skills in middle school, some still struggle with them in high school.

During middle school and high school, students begin to master more specialized reading routines and language uses. Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) found that many high school students never reach the advanced level that would enable them to read challenging texts in science, history, mathematics, and literature. At the advanced level, students learn more sophisticated but less generalizable skills and routines. These skills are not particularly easy to learn since they are very different from oral language and have to be applied to difficult texts.

These difficult texts are often the focus of school curriculum. Daniels and Zemelman (2004) found that in schools, textbooks are overused. The authors argue that there are several reasons why textbooks are ineffective for all students. After an analysis of several textbooks from different subject matters and different grade levels, Daniels and Zemelman concluded that textbooks are superficial, exceedingly hard to read, badly designed, authoritarian, often inaccurate, too expensive, and finally, not written with students in mind. Instead of focusing exclusively on these ineffective materials, educators need to be given strategies that will be more effective for helping ELLs to succeed.
Research Based Instructional Strategies

Along with exposing students to more effective programs, curriculum, and materials, Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) found that in order for ELLs to catch up to their English-speaking peers, teachers need to use research-based instructional strategies in their lessons. There are seven research-based strategies that have shown positive student outcomes. These strategies include:

- Integrate reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills
- Engage in the reading and writing process regularly
- Learn word awareness strategies
- Build and activate background knowledge
- Teach language through content
- Use the students’ native language strategically
- Pair technology with instruction
- Motivate students through choice

The first strategy is to integrate reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills (Gottlieb, 2006; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). ELLs benefit from the integration of all four language skills. Students’ language proficiency is an expression of their linguistic knowledge and language use in the four language domains.

Another important strategy for ELLs who do not know how to read or write in any language is the teaching of the components of reading. Students who can read in their native language will be able to transfer many components of that reading knowledge into English. Once adolescent ELLs acquire basic literacy skills, they need to actively engage in the reading and writing process on a regular basis (Krashen, 2004; Short &
Fitzsimmons, 2007). These researchers found that adolescents who engage in reading and writing on a regular basis are able to develop a robust vocabulary.

Krashen (2004) makes a case for the importance of reading. He makes the argument that reading helps students’ cognitive development and critical thinking skills. Krashen presents research showing that reading is the key to helping students gain access to the advanced level of literacy that Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) describe. If educators understand the level of literacy that students ultimately need for school success and provide them with the tools such as exposure to reading to reach advanced levels of literacy, then more students’ would experience academic

The fourth strategy is to build and activate background knowledge (Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Krashen 2004; and Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). It is important that teachers recognize that all students come to school with rich background knowledge based on experiences they have had. When instruction focuses on topics that children are unfamiliar with, teachers can use a variety of strategies to build background knowledge. Drawing on or building student background before reading aids students with reading comprehension.

Teaching language through content and themes is the fifth strategy a thematic approach helps students to integrate language and content. Linking language instruction to real life experiences, including the content or themes being taught in other classes is beneficial to adolescent ELLs since they are able to use information they learn in one content area to better understand another. An additional useful strategy is to use the students’ native language strategically (Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Krashen, 1996; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). This strategy can be used to help students understand difficult
academic terms and content concepts. When teachers use the students’ native language strategically, students are able to develop a deeper understanding of concepts while learning the English words that define them.

One way that teachers can do this is by using the preview-view-review method (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). Through this method, students are given a preview of a lesson in their native language, they view they language in the target language, and then they review the lesson in their primary language. The preview gives students the opportunity to know the big picture of what the lesson will be focusing on. This can be done through a discussion, story, or graphic organizer in the students’ primary language. The view is done in the target language but the teacher uses visuals, gestures, and realia to help students understand as much as possible. Finally, through the review, the teacher can evaluate how much of the lesson the students understood. The review can be done as a discussion or writing assignment in the students’ primary language.

Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) also emphasize the importance of pairing technology with instruction. They argue that by incorporating technology with second language literacy practices, students can be motivated and language development is fostered. The eighth strategy is to motivate students through choice. Adolescents prefer to have opportunities to exercise choice in their learning. Students’ should have a wide range of diverse selections to choose from (Guthrie & Davis, 2003; Meltzer & Hamman, 2005).

García and Godina (2004) also discuss some basic characteristics of literacy approaches that can aide in the success of adolescent ELLs. They argue for process literacy approaches for ELLs. Some of the basic characteristics of process literacy
approaches include:

- the use of trade books, writing from multiple drafts, integrating reading and writing, peer interactions, a student centered curriculum, giving students choice for reading and writing, inquiry based projects, and open-ended activities in which students are encouraged to explore the various meanings of texts (p. 310).

Jimenez (1997) conducted a study with low-literacy adolescent ELLs. He designed a series of cognitive strategy lessons. These lessons emphasized improving student’s reading fluency by having them repeat oral readings of culturally familiar text. He taught the students how to figure out unknown vocabulary by asking questions, making inferences, searching for cognates and using knowledge acquired in one language to approach the other. He had students talk and reflect on what they were reading. Jimenez reported that students were more engaged with the instruction, talked more about the text, and improved their inferences.

Through looking at different research that has been done with adolescent ELLs, García and Godina (2004) just like Short and Fitzsimmons (2007), have suggested guidelines for the effective literacy instruction of ELLs. These include educators needing to find out who their students are in terms of their language, sociocultural background, educational experiences, and literacy levels in their native language. Next, their program of instruction should include continued instruction in their native language.

Another guideline García and Godina (2004) as well as Vogt, Echevarria, and Short (2010) recommend is that the instruction in the English as a second language (ESL) classroom cover the school’s curriculum standards. They also believe that teachers in all
English classes who have ELLs need to know how to shelter students’ comprehension of English instruction through integrated reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Content area instruction of ELLs needs to be tied to the same content standards that guide the instruction of native-English speaking students. Further, English language arts as a content area needs to be offered as an ESL course. Researchers also recommend that within the ESL English language arts classroom, strategy instruction, in which the teacher models and gives students guided practice in using cognitive strategies to monitor their comprehension in English is used (Vogt et al., 2010; García & Godina, 2004).

Effective literacy instruction of ELLs involves students being given the opportunity to communicate their thoughts authentically through writing. Process literary approaches, combined with strategy instruction and explicit instruction regarding topics they are not familiar with, would be especially helpful for ELLs as well (García & Godina, 2004).

Short and Fitzsimmons (2007), García and Godina (2004), Krashen (1996), and Freeman and Freeman (2009) all bring up the importance of knowing your learners and building on their native language proficiencies. They note that it is important to integrate reading, writing, listening and speaking in all subject matters. Finally, they found that ELLs need to be exposed to the same content standards as all other students. Above all, they emphasize the importance improving the overall schooling of ELLs. Presently, a focus on the academic language that students need for school success has been brought to the attention of educators (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). It is important to have a clear understanding of what academic language is before teaching it.
What Is Academic Language?

Many adolescents who drop out of school are frustrated because they cannot pass math and reading exams required by law (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). Schools need to provide instruction that will help students to think critically, solve problems, and respond to what they learn orally as well as in writing. They need to do these tasks using the academic language of school.

Gibbons (2009) describes academic proficiency as the development of literacy within any subject in the school curriculum. She argues that the development of this literacy involves learning to control new language, a language that is completely different than the language students’ use for everyday communication. Gibbons goes on to explain that understanding and learning to use the appropriate terminology is integral to the concepts being learned.

A study done by Biber (1986) also supports the distinction between conversational and academic language. He found that even within texts, there are differences in language. He found three major differences in the texts he analyzed. The first is that spoken texts are more interactive and show more personal involvement than written texts. He found that written texts have a greater variety of vocabulary and have a more detached style.

Biber (1986) also found that written texts are more abstract while spoken texts are more concrete. He explains that written texts achieve abstraction by the use of features such as nominalization and passives. In contrast, spoken texts are more concrete and situated. It is also more situated in particular contexts.

The third difference identified by Biber is between types of text as reported versus
immediate style. A reported style refers to language that tells about events that occurred in the past and in a different place. In contrast, immediate style uses present tense more often. In immediate style, speakers talk about current events or events that recently occurred and often talk about local events.

Not only does academic language include specialized vocabulary and grammatical patterns, academic proficiency also takes into account the different kinds of genres and text types particular to specific subjects. Different disciplines require different literacy skills. These include reading different types of texts and using different text structures, different presentation formats, and different ways of organizing language (Meltzer & Hamann, 2005).

Cummins (1984) distinguished between academic and conversational language. According to Cummins, there are two components of language learning. The first component is reflected in the ability to hold a conversation about everyday topics. The second involves talking, reading, and writing specifically about school subjects. In one of his key studies, Cummins examined four hundred special education referrals for ELLs in a large school system. Teachers who referred these students had assumed that since the students had adequate oral English, their lack of success with academic tasks was the result of a lack of cognitive ability rather than linguistic factors. Cummins’ argument was that these students did not have learning problems. Although they had developed conversational fluency or basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS), they had not yet developed cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP).

In order to help educators conceptualize the distinction between BICS and CALP, Cummins used quadrants (see Figure 1). Quadrant A represents activities that are context
embedded and cognitively undemanding. Examples of activities that would go into this quadrant include having students fill in the blanks in a poem about themselves, drawing pictures.

Quadrant C represents activities that are cognitively undemanding and context reduced. Activities that could go in this quadrant include texting a friend, and listening to daily announcements in school. The next quadrant, quadrant D represents activities that are cognitively demanding and context reduced. Examples of activities in this quadrant are answering questions in a textbook, filling out worksheets on sentence structure, and answering multiple-choice questions on a standardized test. The quadrant that teachers of ELLs need to target is B. Quadrant B includes activities that are context embedded and cognitively demanding. Activities in this quadrant might include creating a “My Space” page for a character in a book, making a poster with predictions for the future based on stories that students have read, composing a poem that centers on a specific tone, and describing how to do something using signal words.

Adolescent learners are required to read texts that are edited, abstract and reported. They are also expected to write texts that contain these features. Since students develop conversational fluency before academic proficiency, they often include elements common to spoken language in their writing (Freeman & Freeman, 2009).

Swales (2005) was interested in academic speech. He investigated whether academic speech would be more like academic prose or more like conversation. By looking at over 1.7 million transcribed words from academic speech such as lectures and study groups, he found that academic speech has most of the features of social conversations. The researcher concluded that that “if we don’t often speak in full
sentences, or if we rarely talk like books, then we should not be expecting our ESL students to do so” (p. 34).

In the study done in Canada to determine how long it took English language learners to reach grade appropriate conversational fluency and how much additional time is needed to develop academic proficiency, Cummins (1981) reported on the data from school files when studying reasons for the over placement of ELLs in special education. He found that while English language learners were able to develop conversational fluency in as little as two years, it took between five and seven years for students to perform at grade level on tasks in different academic subject areas. These findings were confirmed by Collier (1989), Hakuta, Butler, and Witt (2000), and Snow and Hoefnagel-Hohle (1978).

**Who Needs Academic Language?**

In most cases, English language learners are exposed to conversational language to a much greater extent than academic language. Therefore, these students tend to develop conversational fluency before they develop academic language proficiency (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). Although all students need to be exposed to academic language, there are certain types of learners that especially benefit from being explicitly taught this specialized vocabulary.

Freeman and Freeman (2009) explain that there are different types of ELLs. These learners include the adequate formal schooling students, students with limited formal schooling, and the ELL students who have been in the US seven years or more and still struggle academically-the long-term English learners. ELLs with limited formal schooling and long-term English learners have an especially difficult time with academic
language since they for the most part, did not have the opportunity to develop it in their primary language. It is important that teachers know who these students are so that they can work with them to develop the academic language that they need (Freeman & Freeman, 2009).

Academic language can be defined as a set of linguistic registers that construe multiple and complex meanings at all levels and in all school subjects (Schleppegrell, 2004). Schleppegrell describes academic language as the language used in schooling for the purpose of learning. This language evolves along with the knowledge students develop throughout the years of schooling and across different subject areas. The researcher argues that the more a student advances, the more complex the academic language becomes. Academic language draws upon the discourses of mathematics, science, social science, language arts, as well as other school subjects with specialized vocabulary (Schleppegrell, 2004; Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Schleppegrell & Go, 2009).

Corson (1997) and Schleppegrell (2004) explain that the specific academic language of school subjects are especially challenging to English language learners since they are usually used in culturally determined ways that are specific to a specific meaning system. This is why it is difficult for ELLs to develop and use academic language in ways that native English speakers do.

Gibbons (2009) states that English language learners have a very difficult time with academic texts. Therefore, many of their teachers choose not to expose them to these texts. The author argues that “ongoing simplification of the language is likely to result in students’ having little access to the very registers of English they need to develop for learning across the curriculum” (p.80). Rather than simplifying texts and instruction in
general for ELLs, it is essential that teachers focus on finding ways to expose students to the academic language needed for school success (Schleppegrell, 2004; Schleppegrell & Go, 2009).

**Teaching Academic Language**

Content-area teachers need to help students develop academic proficiency (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). This can be done through scaffolding instruction. According to Freeman and Freeman, many teachers simply focus on content knowledge rather than attending to both content and the academic language needed to comprehend and produce that content knowledge.

When it comes to reading academic texts, Gibbons (2009) argues that English language learners should not be left on their own. She believes that these students need explicit support during class time. She explains that learners need to interact with and actively process texts in order to fully comprehend meaning. Gibbons (2009) argues that the success of English language learners have with content area texts depends on the kinds of reading activities and explicit reading instruction that takes place around those texts. She suggests that specialized reading activities that may occur before, during, and after reading play an important role in helping students have access to text. These reading activities should aim to help learners comprehend a particular text and at the same time, model effective reading strategies. She emphasizes the idea that there is no one magic way to teach reading. Learners need to be shown a variety of strategies to use in reading texts.

Daniels and Zemelman (2004) explain that students are unaware of the mental activity that takes place during effective reading. They found that most students either
search for answers to the questions at the end of the chapter or mechanically read words, hoping that meaning will eventually come to them. The authors recommend that students participate in think-alouds. Think-alouds involve students reading a passage, stopping at several points along the way to reflect aloud about key points in the reading. The entire class can participate and comment or ask questions as they come up. This is one way for students to begin to use academic language in context.

There are a range of language based activities that can be integrated with subject teaching. A central theme in the research that focuses on the academic success of ELLs is the importance of intensive, interactive language practices that focus on the development of academic language (Vogt et al., 2010). Gibbons (2009) argues that language based activities are key to developing academic literacy. She explains that activities can be “placed along a continuum from authentic real world communicative tasks to more pedagogic form focused activities” (p.78). She goes on to say that the teaching purpose will determine the type of activity and kinds of groupings used. Activities that have a communicative focus and provide a context for talking about language are helpful for exposing English language learners to academic language. Gibbons (2009) asserts that language based activities that are designed to develop academic language and literacy are valuable to all students. Since this study will specifically be focused on the academic language of language arts, it is important to explore what current research says specifically about academic language in the language arts classroom.

**Academic Language in the Language Arts Classroom**

There are terms that are used in academic settings-some are used commonly
across content areas and others are content specific (Vogt, et al., 2010). The researchers explain that English language arts has a content specific vocabulary that is used only for language arts includes words such as imagery, symbolism, narrative, and nonfiction. They explain that there are also words that are used across several subject areas but have different meanings depending in what area they are being used. Some words in this category include describe, recommend, and approximate. Understanding both types of academic words in language arts is the key to accessing content for English learners (Vogt, et al.).

Vogt et al. (2010) recommend that English language arts teachers look through teacher’s guides, anthologies, and reading books and note the highlighted vocabulary. They also suggest that teachers identify other terms and phrases that are included in student texts but are not necessarily highlighted for teaching. They explain that these words may be the academic vocabulary that is unfamiliar to ELLs. In addition, teachers can also find important academic terms in the English language arts content standards (Vogt, et al.).

Freeman and Freeman (2009) discuss strategies in language arts classrooms that help students’ develop the academic language specific to that subject. And that support reading. To begin, Freeman and Freeman (2009) recommend that teachers give students information related to strategies for reading. For example, teachers can explain to students that before they read, they can read the title, look at pictures, and remember what they already know. As they read they can be aware of tone, setting, and other story elements. Specifically explaining these strategies helps students to be aware as they read which can help them comprehend what they read. The think-alouds recommended by
Daniels and Zemelman (2004) are also useful in aiding students with becoming comfortable discussing such topics as story elements and figurative language found in language arts texts.

Just like any other academic subject, language arts has its own language. When teaching students the academic vocabulary specific to language arts, Freeman and Freeman (2009) recommend that it be done through the context of reading and writing. For example, students can read a story and discuss the setting, plot, theme, protagonist, and antagonist of the story. Not only can they discuss these terms orally but they can write about them regularly. The more students are exposed to this specific vocabulary, the more familiar they are with it. As Wessels (2011) point out, “If students do not understand the words in the text, they will have difficulty understanding the content” (46).

**Conclusion**

Although there is a great deal of research about ELLs in general, it is only recently that the special needs of long-term ELLs have begun to be identified (Menken et al., 2009; Olsen, 2010). Studies show that all learners and especially long-term ELLs need to be exposed to academic language (Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007, Vogt et al., 2010,) This academic language is essential for school success, especially at the secondary level. In this study I will look for ways to help long-term ELLs develop the academic concepts and vocabulary of language arts.

In the following chapter, I begin by reviewing studies that have been done that relate to this study. First, I review studies on ELLs. Next, studies on long-term ELLs. Finally, I will review studies that have been done about academic language. From there, I
will describe my study including the setting, participants, and selection. I will end the chapter by explaining my data collection and analysis.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

A large number of minority students in US schools are Latino English language learners (ELLs) who historically struggle academically (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). In the past, the focus on ELLs in schools has been concentrated on elementary students. Now, those students are entering and failing in secondary schools. The largest group of these secondary ELLs has been in the US seven or more years. This group of students is known as long-term ELLs (Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2010; Olsen, 2010).

In this study I looked at the academic language development of six secondary Hispanic long-term English learners. I was interested in investigating how the development of academic concepts and vocabulary is reflected in the work they do in their language arts class.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify best practices for long-term English learners. I was specifically interested in exploring how the use of specific strategies to support the development of academic concepts and vocabulary in an English language arts classroom impacts the academic achievement of students in a large, South Texas high school. This study is significant because long-term English learners struggle with the academic concepts and vocabulary of school, and educators need to find ways to support them (Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Menken et al. 2009; Olsen. 2010).
The findings from this study can be used in schools with similar student populations to assist educators in the development of the English language arts curriculum for long-term English learners.

**Long-Term ELLs**

Since this study was conducted with long-term English learners (LTELLs) specifically, it is important to understand what the characteristics of this group of students are. They are the largest group of ELLs in the U.S., yet there is little research about them (Menken, et al., 2010). Olsen (2010) defines long-term ELLs as students “who have been in United States schools 7+ years, are orally fluent in English but reading and writing below grade level, and have low literacy in the home language, if any” (p.7). For the most part, LTELLs are not academically successful. They tend to be below grade level in reading, writing, and math. Because many educators have low expectations for these students and many are well-behaved in the classroom, teachers often give this type of student passing grades. This can lead to false perceptions about their academic achievement. Their low level of academic achievement is often reflected in their low standardized test scores. They often have trouble passing high school exit exams (Gándara & Contreras, 2004).

According to Olsen (2010), long-term ELLs have developed habits of non-engagement and learned to be passive and invisible in school, especially in classroom settings. The majority want to go to college but are unaware that their “academic skills, record, and courses are not preparing them to reach their goal” (p.2). Olsen concluded that neither long-term ELLs, their parents, nor the community realize that these students are in serious academic jeopardy.
Types of Long-Term ELLs

Menken et al. (2010) found that even among long-term ELLs there are differences. The three groups they describe include the *vaivén* students, inconsistent schooling students, and transitioning students. The differences are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

*Types of Long-Term ELLs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaivén</th>
<th>Inconsistent Schooling</th>
<th>Transitioning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students move back and forth between the U.S. and country of origin.</td>
<td>Sub Categories 1. School hoppers 2. Programming differences from school to school 3. Inconsistent programs within the same school 4. The absence of ELL programming altogether</td>
<td>Students have developed native language literacy in their country of origin and are in the process of learning English.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Academic concepts and vocabulary*

A number of researches argue that one of the reasons that long-term ELLs are not academically successful is that they never learned the academic concepts and vocabulary of school (Freeman & Freeman, 2002; Menken & Kleyn, 2010; and Olsen, 2010). Gibbons (2009) describes academic concepts and vocabulary or academic proficiency as the development of literacy within any subject in the school curriculum. She argues that the development of this literacy involves learning to control a new language, a language that is completely different than the language students’ use for everyday communication.
Academic concepts and vocabulary includes specialized vocabulary and grammatical patterns. It also takes into account the different kinds of genres and text types particular to specific subjects. Different disciplines require different literacy skills or academic concepts and vocabulary. These include reading different types of texts and using different text structures, different presentation formats, and different ways of organizing language (Meltzer and Hamann, 2005). Because of the content standards widely used in United States schools, Meltzer and Hamann (2005) explain that students are now required to think, read, and write like historians, mathematicians, and historians. If ELLs better understood the academic concepts and vocabulary of each content area, they would have the opportunity to do this.

**Research Questions**

In this study I looked at the academic concepts and vocabulary development of six long-term English learners who represent the vaiven, inconsistent schooling, and transitioning English learners. I answered one main question and three sub-questions. The question and sub-questions are listed below.

**Question:** In what ways does teaching academic concepts and vocabulary in language arts to secondary long-term English learners impact their academic success on their assignments in their English language arts class?

**Sub-Question:** What specific pedagogical structures for teaching academic concepts and vocabulary were used?

**Sub Question:** What were the students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures that were used?
Sub Question: How did the students’ work reflect their understanding of the academic concepts and the academic vocabulary that were taught?

The methodology used in this study addresses the research questions described above. This study is an observational qualitative study. In addition, the methodology contains characteristics of a content analysis study. Duke and Martin (2011) discuss what literacy educators need to know about research, and in a summary of types of research, explain that “Content analysis is a methodology for examining the content of something, such as instruction” (p. 14). This study does just that as it looks at pedagogical structures used to teach academic language to ELLs.

In this chapter, I will review previous studies that have been done on long-term English learners, academic language, and academic language in the language arts classroom. Next, I will describe the setting and population of the sample group and will include a brief description of the six participants selected for the study. Finally, the last two sections will review the data collection and data analysis procedures.

**Studies on Long-Term ELLs**

In the following section I will discuss studies that have been conducted with long-term ELLs. Methods that have been used to study these students include surveys, mixed methods and case studies.

**Survey**

Olsen (2010) published a report that she hoped would be “a wake up call to California educators and policymakers to recognize the large number of English Learner students amassing in California secondary schools who, despite many years in our
schools and despite being close to the age at which they should be able to graduate, are still not English proficient and have incurred major academic deficits” (p. 1).

In 2008, a coalition known as California Together identified long-term ELLs as a priority for education policy work in the state. Because of the lack of data on the topic, they conducted a statewide survey between October of 2009 and February of 2010, looking at available student data from the 2008-2009 school year. In 2010, nine school districts were invited to participate in a long-term ELL forum. Each district formed leadership teams who investigated their long-term ELL population.

By looking in depth at the results of these surveys, Olsen (2010) created her report. In the report, the researcher explains that ELLs who have been in the United States for 7 years or longer become what are known as long-term ELLs. She describes the characteristics of these students including why they struggle academically and what distinct needs they have. She shows how they are currently being served in secondary schools and concludes by presenting how they should be served in secondary schools. The survey results gave Olsen valuable information regarding the needs of long-term ELLs in secondary schools, and allowed her to discuss systems issues and give state policy recommendations.

In addition to the survey, Olsen got information from leadership teams from 9 districts. These teams conducted further study, and Olsen used their findings as well. Leadership teams “from these districts undertook inquiries into their Long-Term English Learner population as part of their participation, adding a deeper look at the systemic issues that contribute to the creation of Long-Term English Learners and at the barriers that stand in the way of serving their needs well” (p. 9).
Qualitative Study

Phase I

In 2007, Menken et al. conducted a descriptive qualitative pilot study in three New York public secondary schools serving long-term ELLs (LTELLs). The purpose of the study was to learn about the characteristics of long-term ELLs in New York City. They looked specifically at the students’ educational backgrounds, the types of services the long-term ELLs were receiving, and their specific educational needs.

For this pilot study, Menken et al. (2007) interviewed 29 long-term ELLs, and educators at the different school sites including five administrators and four teachers. They also analyzed the students’ academic performance data including school transcripts from elementary to high school, scores on statewide and local assessments, and school records. The interviews were the primary source of data and the quantitative school performance data helped to contextualize the interview data. The qualitative data was analyzed by “coding according to themes that arose repeatedly” (p. 9). The findings Menken et al. reported indicate the most frequent themes. For example, they found that many of the students had experienced inconsistent schooling. Another theme was that most of these learners prefer to do their schoolwork in English. From the themes that they were able to categorize LTELLs into the three categories: Vaivén, Inconsistent US Schooling, and Transitioning. Data they collected from their pilot study not only helped the researchers to categorize the long-term ELLs, it also gave them questions for further research.
Mixed Methods Study

Phase II

In Phase II of their project, Menken et al. (2010) conducted a mixed-methods study that was guided by the questions:

In what ways does high school programming focused on language and literacy development in English and Spanish benefit LTELLs, if at all?

How can academic literacy in both languages be taught explicitly to secondary English language learners? (p. 6).

For this part of their research, Menken et al. (2007) continued to study the same students at the same schools as in Phase I. Based on the research they had conducted in Phase I, they planned and developed an intervention that they used at two of the schools. For the intervention, they planned and developed a program focused on academic language and literacy development in both English and Spanish.

Along with the intervention, Menken et al. (2010) collected two major sources of quantitative data that included: a pre-and post test of the reading comprehension portion of the Academic Language and Literacy Diagnostic (ALLD) and the test scores of the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). The ALLD was administered in both English and Spanish at the start of the school year and then again at the end of the school year at all three schools. The NYSESLAT was administrated to the students at the end of the school year.

The quantitative data was analyzed using Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The HLM was used to show the researchers the difference between the treatment and the non-treatment schools. The ANOVA was used
to compare the students’ performance on the NYSESLAT with students who were not participating on the study.

The qualitative data in this study consisted of classroom observations, student interviews, student focus groups, and teacher and administrator interviews. All of the qualitative data that was collected offered the researchers “a portrait of instructional practices and views about the biliteracy program implemented in participating schools to meet the academic needs of the LTEL population” (p. 8).

Through this research, Menken et al. (2010) had three major findings. The first was that students who participated in the intervention and participated in a program that focused on academic language and literacy development had greater academic success than those who did not participate in the intervention. Second, students were more successful when their teachers were engaged and prepared to work with them. Finally, the researchers concluded that students’ educational background experiences directly affect their academic success.

**Case Study**

Freeman and Freeman (2009) did case studies on three teachers who work with secondary long-term ELLs. They collected data through interviews, teacher self reflections, and student work. Through their research, Freeman and Freeman were able to conclude that these students need to develop academic language in order to “meet the demands of content-area instruction” (p. 192). The researchers found that creative teachers find ways to help students develop academic language.

Table 3 gives a summary of studies that have been done on long-term ELLs.
Table 3

*Studies of Long-Term ELLs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Definition of Long-Term ELLs</th>
<th>Method of Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olsen (2010)</td>
<td>ELLs who are close to graduation age are still not English proficient and have major academic deficits.</td>
<td>English learners who have been in US schools 7 plus years, are orally fluent in English but reading and writing below grade level, and have low literacy in the home language, if any</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menken, Kleyn and Chae (2007) Phase I</td>
<td>Long-term ELLs in high school are disproportionately represented in national rates of dropout and grade retention in the US</td>
<td>Students who have attended school in the United States for seven years or more, and continue to require language support services in school</td>
<td>Interviews, document reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menken, Kleyn and Chae (2010) Phase II</td>
<td>The schooling of long-term ELLs has been linguistically subtractive.</td>
<td>Emergent bilinguals (LTELLs) who have attended US schools for seven or more years and whose prior schooling has been linguistically subtractive</td>
<td>Pre and post tests, test scores, classroom observations, interviews, focus groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freeman and Freeman (2009)</td>
<td>Long-term ELLs have grown to be the largest group of concern for educators since, for the most part, they are not experiencing academic success</td>
<td>Students who have been in the United States for seven years or more and speak English quite well. These students struggle with reading and writing in English and their primary language</td>
<td>Case Studies, interviews, self-reflections, student work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Freeman and Freeman (2009), Menken et al. (2010) and Olsen (2010) found that secondary long-term ELLs struggle with the academic language of school. The researchers below have looked at academic language in different ways.

**Academic Language**

A number of studies have focused on the language itself in an attempt to differentiate academic language from conversational language. Methods used to study the nature of academic language include document reviews, linguistic analyses, and corpus linguistic studies.

**Document Reviews**

**Cummins.**

In 1984, Cummins examined four hundred special education referrals for ELLs in a large school system in Canada. The researcher found that the teachers who referred the students had assumed that since the students had adequate oral English, they were not academically successful because of a lack of cognitive ability. From doing this study, Cummins concluded that many ELLs have conversational fluency but do not get the opportunity to develop academic language proficiency and that educators need to be able to identify the differences between the two types of language proficiency.

**Linguistic Analyses**

**Schleppegrell and Go.**

By using an approach that looks at students’ writing from a functional linguistics perspective, Schleppegrell and Go (2009) were able to recognize the strengths as well as the needs of four students’ writing development. The study was done during the
childrens’ first year in the United States. Two of the students were in fifth grade, and one was in sixth. The participants attended an elementary school in northern California. The researchers found that the teachers working with the students had few tools for helping them to improve their writing. They recognized that the analytic tools from systemic functional linguistics (SFL) could offer teachers “ways of focusing on language that is relevant for particular tasks” (p. 529). Specifically, they argue that students need instruction about language in the context of writing particular types of texts.

Gibbons.

In her study of an inner city school in Sydney, Gibbons (2009) looked at children who had learned conversational English but had difficulty in understanding and using the more context-reduced registers of the classroom, especially in the secondary years where the demands on written literacy increase. Using a linguistic analysis of students’ texts to identify features characteristic of academic language, she analyzed writing samples of four students. The teacher followed the curriculum cycle used in many Australian schools. This cycle includes four stages: small group work, teacher guided oral reporting, and journal writing. The texts from each stage were analyzed in relation to each student. Through her analysis, Gibbons (2009) concluded that all of the curriculum cycle stages are important for ELLs since they all contribute to the understanding of academic language. In the small group stage, students have the opportunity to work together to build background knowledge. Once students had learned some key concepts during small group time, the teacher was able to “use new wordings and ways of meaning-a new register-which were more readily interpretable by the students” (p. 115). Students were able to use their new academic language in their individual writing.
Schleppegrell and Go (2007) and Gibbons (2009) used analytic tools from SFL to analyze students’ writing development. Gibbons (2009) found that teachers can use students’ writing to “identify features relevant to a particular task and then help students expand their control of those features” (p. 529). Schleppegrell and Go (2007) concluded that this analysis of students’ texts could best be accomplished by teachers working together to identify language features, discussing the functional grammar constructs, and investigating how students will use language in their writing.

**Corpus Linguistic Studies**

**Swales.**

Between 1997 and 2002, Swales collected 1.7 million transcribed words from the University of Michigan. These words were drawn from lectures, office hours, study group sessions, research group meetings, and dissertation defenses. When the research project began, Swales wanted to investigate whether academic speech would be more like academic prose or more like conversation. Through his analysis of the words, Swales (2005) found that lecture and discussion styles have most of the features of ordinary conversation. He concludes that if “we don’t often speak in full sentences, or if we rarely talk like books, then we should not be expecting our ESL students to do so” (p. 34).

**Corson.**

Corson (1997) examined two different collections of English vocabulary. First, he looked at the Birmingham corpus, which lists over 57,000 words that people use in daily conversation. He also looked at the 150 most frequent used words in the University word list. Through his analysis, Corson found that most conversational vocabulary is drawn
from Anglo-Saxon vocabulary while words in academic texts contain a high number of words with Greek and Latin roots.

**Biber.**

Biber (1986) used a multi-feature/multi dimension approach to provide a global description of similarities and differences among spoken/written text types in English. He collected five hundred written text samples of about two thousand words each. The first group of text samples included both fiction and non-fiction. In order to read these texts, students would need to know academic language. He also looked at a sample of spoken texts, which included recorded conversations, broadcasts, and public speeches.

Using a single quantitative analysis, Biber (1986) found three differences between the two text sets. He found that spoken texts were more interactive and showed more personal involvement. Next, he found that written texts are more abstract and spoken texts are more concrete. Finally, he concluded that written texts are edited, abstract, and reported while spoken text is interactive, situated, and immediate.

**Long-Term Study of Strategy Implementation**

It is clear that students need academic language and educators can not assume that students, especially long-term ELLs will enter classrooms with academic language. In my study I will be looking at the strategies used to teach the academic concepts and vocabulary as well as the effects of those strategies. In the following observational study, researchers are conducting an on-going study where they look at the effects of implementing a model that specifically shelters instruction for ELL students.

**Vogt, Echevarria, and Short.**
Vogt, Echevarria, and Short (2010) are conducting a long-term study in four large urban school districts to refine their sheltered instruction observation protocol (SIOP) model in middle school classrooms. The purpose of their study is to continue to develop their explicit model of sheltered instruction for ELLs. The model is composed of 30 items grouped together in three sections: Preparation, instruction, and review/evaluation.

In their study, the teachers use the model in different settings including ESL classes, content-based ESL classes, and sheltered content classes. The teachers work with students with beginning to advanced levels of English proficiency. In addition, teachers participate in a three day professional development institute where they had the opportunity to set personal development goals for themselves. The institute provides the teachers with training of how to implement the model in their classrooms.

Vogt et al. (2010) observed classroom instruction and videotape teachers in the fall, winter, and spring. In between the video tapings, teachers were observed once a month. During these observations, teachers were scored according to the 30 items of the SIOP model and comments were recorded when necessary. The researchers shared their analysis with the teachers in order to allow teachers growth. The data collected was analyzed to determine overall teacher change and specific development in areas of instructional practice.

While teachers implement the SIOP model in their classrooms, the researchers gathered data to evaluate student progress. This data included grades, promotion through the ESL program, attendance, and a writing assessment measure. Their goal was to “determine whether students receiving high quality sheltered instruction differed
significantly from their peers in non-sheltered or lower quality sheltered instruction in their content and language achievement” (p. 7).

My study will focus specifically on teaching academic concepts and vocabulary in the language arts classroom. Although some educators have given recommendations about teaching academic language in the language arts classroom, there is a need for research to be done in this area. In a recent synthesis of existing research on teaching English language and literacy to ELLs in elementary grades, Vogt et al. (2010) stated that although few empirical studies have been conducted on the effects of academic language instruction, the central theme was the importance of intensive interactive language practice that focuses on developing academic language. This recommendation was made based upon considerable expert opinion, with the caveat that additional research is still needed (p. 9).

Table 4 summarizes studies of academic language.
### Table 4

**Studies of Academic Language**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Question Related to Academic Language</th>
<th>Method of Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cummins (1984)</td>
<td>Were ELLs referred to special education because of lack of cognitive ability or lack of English proficiency?</td>
<td>Document review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swales (2005)</td>
<td>Is academic speech more like academic prose or more like conversation?</td>
<td>Corpus Linguistic Study Document analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corson (1997)</td>
<td>What are the linguistic differences between words used in daily conversations and words used in academic texts?</td>
<td>Corpus Linguistic Study Document review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biber (1986)</td>
<td>What are the differences between spoken and written text types in English?</td>
<td>Corpus Linguistic Study Text sample analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schleppegrell and Go (2007)</td>
<td>Can the analysis of texts that students’ read help educators identify language features and then help the students use these features in their own writing?</td>
<td>Document review Linguistic analysis of texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gibbons (2009)</td>
<td>Does the curriculum cycle used in many Australian schools contribute to students’ understanding of academic language?</td>
<td>Document Review Linguistic analysis of texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vogt, Echevarria, and Short (2010)</td>
<td>Is the academic performance of ELLs affected when they are taught using a sheltered instruction model?</td>
<td>Classroom observations, videotape observations, document reviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this qualitative dissertation, I conducted a study of the academic language development of 6 Hispanic long-term ELLs in a secondary language arts classroom. The following sections lay out the setting, participants, data collection, and data analysis of the study.

**Setting of the Study**

The study was conducted in an English II high school regular English language arts classroom in a South Texas high school with a total school population of approximately 3,200 students in grades 9-12. Seven percent of the students at the school are identified as English learners. Although some of the long-term ELLs at the school are still classified under ELL status and receive services, the majority have been mainstreamed and no longer qualify for special services. ELLs in the regular English II class are no longer classified as ELLs but have the characteristics of long-term English learners.

**Participants and Selection Plan**

The subjects for this investigation were high school sophomores enrolled in an English language arts class taught by one identified teacher. The teacher of the course was a colleague who regularly plans with the researcher and other English II teachers. The teacher colleague was also a collaborator in the study as she planned with the researcher and implemented the strategies. It was not her teaching that was the focus of this study, but rather the effect of the strategies she employed.

There were approximately 80 students in five regular English II classes. Of these students, 6 were selected to participate in the study using the criteria explained below.
While the students in the English II classes were not identified as ELLs, many entered school speaking languages other than English and have characteristics of long-term English learners as mentioned above.

A survey is regularly administered to all sophomores enrolled in regular English II by teachers in order to obtain basic background information about their students. Although the students in the classes are not identified as English learners, they often have many of the characteristics of ELLs. The information gathered from the survey allows teachers to determine if students have ELL characteristics. The survey includes questions relating to students’ personal background such as where they were born and where they grew up. It also asks students about both their social and academic language preferences including questions about what language they speak the most and what language they are most comfortable doing school work in. Finally, students responded to questions about their academic life. They recorded what they believed about their average grades are in different school subjects as well as identified what they felt their strengths both inside and outside of school are. (See survey in appendix A).

By analyzing the information on these surveys, I identified the long-term ELLs. Once I identified the long-term ELLs, I randomly selected six students. I asked those students if they were interested in participating in the study. The students were assured that their grades would not be affected if they decided to participate or not participate.

**Cooperating Teacher**

The cooperating teacher for this study received her teaching certificate in education. Her specialty was English. At the time this study was conducted, she was in her fourth year as a teacher. She had taught English II only.
The cooperating teacher had been to several trainings that focused on working with ELLs. For example, she had attended a SIOP during her second year as a teacher.

**Students**

**Alejandro.**

Alejandro was born in Brownsville, Texas but moved to Houston, Texas when he was one. When he was three, his family moved to Mexico where they lived until Alejandro was four. When he moved back to Brownsville Texas, he entered Kindergarten in what was considered to be a bilingual school. From kindergarten to fifth grade, he remembers that his schooling was both in English and Spanish. He specifically remembers there was a lot more Spanish than English.

When Alejandro moved on to middle school, he explained that all of the classes were in English and this was a big change for him. He felt that it was difficult because he had a hard time keeping up. Now that he is in high school, Alejandro claims that he is as comfortable working in English as he is in Spanish. He speaks both English and Spanish comfortably.

According to Alejandro, he is a good student. His strengths are math and English but he explains that he has good grades in all of his classes. The cooperating teacher in this study stated that Alejandro is an excellent student. He works hard and helps other students who struggle with their English.

**Josue.**

Although he was born in the United States, Josue moved to Mexico when he was only a few months old. He lived in Mexico and spoke Spanish until he was 12. In Mexico he went to school and was an average student. Since he does not come from a
wealthy family, Josue attended a government funded school rather than a private school. Therefore, the quality of education he received might not have been the best. He and his family moved to Arlington, Texas where they lived for two years. In Arlington, Josue remembers that except for his ESL class, his classes were in Spanish.

When Josue turned 14, his family heard that there was agricultural work they could do in Hartville Ohio, so in the middle of the school year, they moved. In Ohio, schooling was all in English. His family stayed in Hartville half a year and when the agricultural season was over, migrated to Brownsville Texas to live with some family members. In Brownsville, Josue’s classes were in English although some of his teachers gave him native language support when he needed it. Because he had been in the United States for some time, he was not given any special ELL services.

At the end of the school year, Josue’s family moved back to Hartville where he again, attended all English classes. Josue explains that in Hartville, no one speaks Spanish so he is not given any native language support. Josue is now 17. He spends the first half of every school year in Hartville and the second in Brownsville.

Josue has now lived in the United States five years and still feels much more comfortable not only speaking Spanish but reading and writing in Spanish. He feels that he is a fairly good student. The class he believes is the most challenging for him is science. Josue says that the classes are hard because of the English. The cooperating teacher for this study explained to me that on most assignments, Josue needs her to explain the instructions to him in Spanish. She also stated that he works best when he is in a group or with a partner who knows Spanish and is able to help him.

Silvia.
When she was one, Silvia moved from Brownsville, Texas, where she was born to Mexico. She lived and went to school in Mexico until she was ten years old. According to Silvia, she learned in English and Spanish at her school in Mexico. When she moved back to Brownsville, she was put into classes that were all in English. According to Silvia, this was fine for her because of the English she had learned in Mexico.

Now, Silvia explains that she feels more comfortable speaking and doing schoolwork in English. Except for science, she feels she does well in her classes. In science, she struggles to pass. The main reason she struggles in this class is that she finds that there are a lot of hard science words that she doesn’t understand. She does believe that English is her strongest subject.

The cooperating teacher for this study stated that although Silvia was absent often, she was a very strong student and did a good job on the assignments she completed. What often lowered her grade was the fact that she was absent so often and did not make up the work.

David.

David was born Oklahoma and moved to Brownsville, Texas, when he was two. He started school at an elementary school in Brownsville. Although he had only spoken Spanish at home, he was placed in all English classes. He remembers that he was not a great student, he often felt lost and confused. When he was nine, he transferred to another school where he had some support in Spanish but since it was the first time he was introduced to academic Spanish, he felt it was more difficult than English.

After elementary school, he attended one year of middle school in Brownsville where his classes were all in English. Again, he did not feel he was a very good student.
The next year, he moved to Mexico where he attended school for one year. Everything was in Spanish and although he was very comfortable speaking Spanish, he felt that doing academic work in Spanish was very difficult. The next year he moved back to Brownsville and went to yet another middle school where he felt behind although he stated that it was easier than the school in Mexico.

Now in high school David considers himself to be an average student. He feels that all of his classes are hard and he doesn’t feel that he has strengths or weaknesses. He does say that he prefers to do his schoolwork in English. The cooperating teacher in this study explained that David is bright and witty, he always did his class work quickly but always did a fairly good job. She felt that he was a better student than he thinks he is.

Roman.

Roman was born in San Benito, Texas, but just like Josue, he moved to Mexico when he was a few months old. He attended school in Mexico, a private school. He remembers being a fairly good student. When he was ten years old, his family moved to Brownsville, Texas where he entered fourth grade. According to Roman, his fourth and fifth grade classes were all in Spanish. He doesn’t remember any English at all. The first time he remembers being introduced to English was in sixth grade. That year all of his schooling was in English, he did not receive any native language support.

Since that time, all of Roman’s schooling has been in English. Roman explained that he feels more comfortable speaking in Spanish but prefers to do his schoolwork in English. He does not feel that he knows enough academic Spanish to be successful doing schoolwork in Spanish.

Roman believes he is an average student. He feels that he is strongest in math.
and history and weaker in English and Science. The cooperating teacher for this study stated that Roman is a hard worker and although he struggles, he improved quite a bit throughout the school year.

**Abdiel.**

Abdiel was born in Brownsville, Texas, but when he started school, it was all in Spanish. According to Abdiel, he was not introduced to English until he was eight years old. That year, he was placed in all English classes and he felt that he didn’t learn anything that year since he did not know English.

Since that time, all of Abdiel’s classes have been in English and he has not received any native language support. He stated that he never really caught up after third grade and he was never a good student after that. He explains that he still feels more comfortable speaking Spanish, and if he had the choice, he would rather do schoolwork in Spanish.

Abdiel does not believe he is a good student. His weakness is English and science although he also feels that in math and history is his at the bottom of the class. Abdiel explained that he usually doesn’t pass his classes. The cooperating teacher in this study agrees that Abdiel is not a strong student. She stated that he struggled with his assignments throughout the school year and rarely spoke. She even noted that she could barely remember what his voice sounds like since he spoke so little.

**Data Collection**

**Lesson Plans**

I designed lesson plans that specifically engaged students in the academic language of language arts (Freeman and Freeman, 2009; Gibbons 2009) with a focus on
the academic vocabulary and concepts that are included on the state language arts standardized exam. Each lesson plan included the pedagogical structures that would be used (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). I specifically observed how the instructor integrated the four language skills, how she taught the reading and writing process, how she implemented reading comprehension strategies, how she assisted students with vocabulary development, how she drew on and built students’ background knowledge, and how she taught language through content (Freeman and Freeman, 2009). Three lessons were taught each week. Lessons lasted between 30 and 40 minutes.

As explained above, the teacher of the sophomore English II class and I planned lessons together on a regular basis. She was a collaborator, though not a co-researcher, on this project. We worked together to plan specific strategies and academic vocabulary content to teach together drawing on the English Language State Standards and the research of Short and Fitzsimmons (2007), Freeman and Freeman (2009), Meltzer and Hamann (2005), and Gibbons (2009).

**Researcher’s Observation Journal**

For each lesson plan that the cooperating teacher and I developed, I observed the lesson. I took field notes. As I observed, I recorded the students’ I was observing on that particular day and the academic concepts and vocabulary that was being taught in the lesson. I recorded the strategy or strategies that the cooperating teacher used and described the assignment students’ were given.

Hubbard and Power (1999) explain that using an observation journal assists the researcher in recording moments of insight in the classroom. They explain that journals allow a researcher to record events as they are happening. Merriam (1998) explains that
through observation, we are able to learn about and make sense of our world as well as guide our future actions.

**Student Interviews**

After each lesson, I asked students interview questions. The questions were modified for each lesson depending on what academic vocabulary and concepts were taught (see Appendix C). The purpose of these questions was to see whether or not the students were able to understand the academic vocabulary and concepts that were taught and whether or not they considered the pedagogical structures that were used to teach the lesson helpful. These interview questions were piloted by a class of similar students in the fall of 2010. The questions were modified to fit this study.

**Document Review**

I collected all student work from the lessons. I read the student work and highlighted evidence of the use of academic vocabulary and concepts looking specifically for an understanding of academic vocabulary and concepts of language arts such as *protagonist*, *theme*, and *tone*. For each assignment, I used a chart to indicate in what ways, if any, the student showed an understanding of the academic vocabulary and concepts in each assignment. (Appendix D).

This chart was made for each student for each assignment. At the end of the research project, I looked over the charts and noted what pedagogical structures and assignments best helped students to understand the academic vocabulary and concepts being taught. Drawing on this evidence I described how the students’ work showed or did not show understanding.
This chart was piloted by a class of similar students in the fall of 2010. These categories were modified to fit this study.

**Data Analysis**

The first step of the analysis of this qualitative observational study was to choose the participants for the study by reading and analyzing the student surveys and identifying the long-term ELLs. The next step was to read through my researcher’s journal in order to determine what was done in the lessons.

The third step was to re-read the student interview responses relating to each lesson in order to gain an understanding of the students’ perspective on their learning experience. A second, more in depth reading of the student interview responses followed the initial reading. I looked for and made notes of patterns that I saw relating to the different teaching strategies and whether or not the students felt that they learned the academic vocabulary and concepts of each lesson. The data was analyzed qualitatively, using quantitative data to strengthen the conclusions. The quantitative data consisted of counts of the numbers of students who perceived the different pedagogical structures as helpful in understanding the academic vocabulary and concepts and the numbers of times students were successful in completing assignments satisfactorily as measured by the rubrics for each assignment. I organized the information onto a recording sheet (Hubbard and Power, 1999), which included each pedagogical structure, academic vocabulary or concepts introduced, and student responses to each (See data recording form in Appendix F)
Once I had all of the above information, I attempted to determine whether the individual students had either similar or different levels of success or failure in learning the academic vocabulary and concepts of language arts using the lesson plans developed. I also looked to see if there were any differences in the students’ perceptions. I made a graphic in which I compared and contrasted the students’ perceptions and level of success with academic vocabulary and concepts.

This is an observational qualitative study. Merriam (1998) explains that in qualitative studies, “Because the primary instrument in qualitative research is human, all observations and analysis are filtered through that human being’s world view, values, and perspectives” (p.22). She also notes that observation “offers a firsthand account of the situation under study and, when combined with interviewing and document analysis, allows for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated” (p. 111).

In addition, the methodology contains characteristics of a content analysis study. In this study, the students’ assignments were the content that was collected and analyzed. Duke and Martin (2011) point out that in a content analysis, “the content of something” (p. 14) is analyzed. In addition, Creswell (2006) states that in content analysis studies, only one type of data is collected, but both types of data analysis are used. For example, a researcher would collect only qualitative data but would analyze the data both qualitatively (developing themes) and quantitatively (counting words or rating responses on predetermined scales). In this study, students were interviewed and their class assignments were analyzed. Therefore, this methodology is in line with the purpose of this study, which is to describe and analyze the effects of teaching the academic
vocabulary and concepts of language arts to high school long-term English learners in English II.

**Conclusion**

The review of studies of long-term ELLs and the studies on academic language revealed different methodologies. Most studies in these areas were both qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative data collection methodologies included surveys, interviews, observations, document reviews, linguistic analysis of text features, and case studies. Some of the quantitative data focused on test scores and analyzing word use. Each methodology was chosen to answer the research questions asked by the different researchers. Regarding teaching academic language in the language arts classroom, more research is needed.

The data collection method for this study was qualitative and the conclusions were strengthened by quantitative data. By keeping a researcher’s observation journal, I was able to record what each lesson consisted of, what worked, what didn’t work and why. Through the student interviews, I gained important knowledge about what students understood about the lessons and whether or not they thought they were learning the academic vocabulary and concepts. Finally, by looking for patterns in student work, I had the opportunity to see if in fact students were learning academic vocabulary and concepts by noting if they were able to use academic vocabulary and concepts effectively in their schoolwork.

After the data collection process, I gave a holistic description of what I learned through the study. The findings that I drew from the analysis of my data are presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

In the United States, English language learners (ELLs) make up about 45 percent of the Hispanic population (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). In the last few years, there has been a focus on Hispanic ELLs in elementary schools but a large number of these students are now entering secondary schools. The largest group of secondary ELLs are the long-term ELLs (LTELLs). The majority of LTELLs have been in the U.S. for seven or more years. Many of these students are not succeeding academically. At this time, there is limited research focusing on LTELLs. (Menken et al., 2010).

Purpose

LTELLs are entering and failing in secondary schools at alarming rates (Menken et al., 2010). The purpose of this study is to identify best practices for long-term English Learners. I am interested in exploring the ways that teaching academic vocabulary to secondary LTELLs impacts their academic success on their assignments in their English language arts class. I am specifically interested in exploring how the use of specific pedagogical structures such as teacher modeling, group work, guided discussion, partner work, and independent work to support the development of academic language in an English language arts classroom impacted the academic achievement of these students.

Questions

In this study I examined the academic language development of six long-term English learners. I investigated one main question and three sub-questions:
Question: In what ways does teaching academic concepts and vocabulary in language arts to secondary long-term English learners impact their academic success on their assignments in their English language arts class? My sub questions are:

(4) What specific pedagogical structures for teaching academic concepts and vocabulary were used?

(5) What are the students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures that were used?

(6) How did the students’ work reflect their understanding of the academic concepts and the academic vocabulary that were taught?

**Subjects and Setting**

In order to determine the most effective ways to teach academic concepts and academic vocabulary to secondary LTELLs, I examined the academic language development of 6 Hispanic long-term ELLs in a secondary language arts classroom. The subjects for this investigation are high school sophomores enrolled in an English language arts class taught by one teacher.

I selected the students by asking all of the English II students to complete a survey. The information gathered from the survey allowed me to determine which students had long-term ELL characteristics. LTELLs are students who have been in U.S. schools for seven years or more (Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Olsen, 2010.). These students are not usually academically successful. They are often below grade level in reading, writing and in many cases, math as well (Menken, et al., 2010). Some LTELLs have adequate grades, which gives them a false perception of their academic achievement. Their low level of academic achievement can be seen through their low standardized test scores. Although these students have oral English skills, they do not
have the necessary academic proficiency needed to be at the same level as their native English-speaking peers (Freeman & Freeman, 2009).

I randomly selected six students who were identified by the survey as LTELs. I asked these students if they were interested in participating in the study. The students were assured that their grades would not be affected if they decide to participate or not participate.

The setting for the study was an English II regular English language arts classroom in a South Texas high school. The teacher of the class is a colleague who regularly plans with the researcher and other English II teachers.

**Data Collection**

To gather data needed to answer the three sub-questions, I used a variety of methods.

**Lesson Plans**

I worked with the cooperating teacher, to design lesson plans that would engage students in activities that would enable them to learn the academic concepts and the academic vocabulary of language arts (Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Gibbons 2009). The more specific focus of the assignments was the academic vocabulary and concepts included in the English language arts standards for tenth grade. We organized assignments around themes that would draw on the students’ backgrounds and interests (Freeman & Freeman, 2009).

We decided that our major theme would be the power of the individual. We wanted to have the opportunity to expose the students to the idea that they as individuals have the power to make a positive difference in the world. We chose a novel, *The Hunger*
Games (Collins, 2008) which tells the story of a teenage girl who fights against a corrupt government. We created activities that related to the different chapters of the book.

In addition, we devised some specific assignments that would help the students be successful on the up-coming English Language Arts standardized state exam. We specifically designed those assignments around the personal narrative and multiple-choice sections. These were the sections that past students had typically struggled with.

In both The Hunger Games assignments as well as the assignments that focused on preparing students for the standardized exam, we made sure that each assignment included important academic vocabulary and concepts. We also worked to incorporate a variety of pedagogical structures into the assignments.

For each lesson plan that the cooperating teacher and I developed, I observed the assignment as my colleague taught it and took field notes in my researcher’s journal. I recorded a description of the assignment, the academic concepts, and the academic vocabulary that were the focus of the assignment. The journal also served as a resource since I used my notes from the journal to create my document review chart.

In addition to my classroom observations, I relied on two main sources of data to answer my question and sub-questions: student interviews and a review of the documents students created. In the following sections, I describe the data I collected to answer each question.

**Researcher’s Journal**

The lesson plans and the researchers journal were used to help me both plan and continue to focus on my first sub-question, “What specific pedagogical structures for teaching academic concepts and vocabulary are used?” Through the lesson plans, I had
the opportunity to make sure that the assignments the students would participate in contained a variety of pedagogical structures. By recording each completed assignment in the researcher’s journal, I was able to record which pedagogical structures were used.

**Student Interviews**

To answer my second and third sub-questions, “What are the students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures that were used? and “How did the students’ work reflect their understanding of the academic concepts and the academic vocabulary that were taught?” I conducted an interview with each of the six students after each assignment. I interviewed the students immediately after the assignment as often as possible. In some cases, I had to wait until the end of the day or the beginning of the next day if the students were in a class that was not one of my free periods.

I asked two questions: (1) In today’s assignment, you reviewed (academic vocabulary or concept that was reviewed was inserted here). In your own words, what do you understand about this? (2) In today’s assignment, the teacher used (pedagogical Structure or pedagogical structures that students participated in were listed here). How did this help you or not help you to understand (academic concepts and vocabulary from the assignment listed here).

The interviews were designed to give information about students’ perceptions. I wanted to know what the students perceived that they understood about the academic vocabulary that was the focus of the assignment. In addition, I wanted to know their perceptions of the pedagogical structure or pedagogical structures that were used. I specifically wanted to know if they felt that the pedagogical structure helped them or did not help them to understand the academic vocabulary.
Document Review

In order to answer the sub-question, “How did the students’ work reflect their understanding of the academic concepts and vocabulary that were taught?” I collected student work that included academic concepts and vocabulary. To facilitate the analysis of the data, I created a document review chart in order to have a record of each assignment and how student work reflected or did not reflect understanding of the academic concepts and vocabulary that were taught. The chart included a description of each assignment, the academic concepts and vocabulary that were the focus of the assignment, the pedagogical structure or pedagogical structures that were used, as well as whether or not the students were successful with the assignment. I was able to determine this by looking over each student’s assignment and noting whether they were able to complete it successfully, somewhat successfully, or not at all as described on the rubrics that I created for each assignment. By looking at the document review chart, I was able to draw conclusions about what types of assignments as well as what pedagogical structures contributed to student success. This larger detailed chart has been divided into logical sections in the remainder of this chapter to flesh out the results of the study. Table 5 gives a summary of all the data collected for the study.
Table 5

Data Collected for the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Total #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Plans</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Entries</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Interviews</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Assignments</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overview of Data Analysis

In the following sections, I begin by reviewing the data used to answer the sub-questions- “What specific pedagogical structures for using academic language were used?” and “What are the students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures that were used?” This data includes notes from my researcher’s journal, the document review chart, and student interviews. I describe the different pedagogical structures that were used and how successful or unsuccessful the students perceived the pedagogical structures to be in helping them to understand the academic concepts and vocabulary.

Next, I present the data related to the third sub-question-How did the students’ work reflect their understanding of the academic concepts and vocabulary that were taught? This data comes from the document review chart, the student work, and the student interviews. I discuss how their work reflected or did not reflect their understanding of the academic concepts and vocabulary. I conclude with a summary of the data that has been presented.
Pedagogical Structures and Students’ Perceptions of Them

In this study, students’ participated in 5 different pedagogical structures. These included teacher modeling, guided discussion, group work, partner work, and independent work. In this section, each pedagogical structure will be explained. Then, drawing on the information from the student interviews, the students’ perceptions of the different pedagogical structures will be described.

Information about students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures was drawn from student interviews about how the pedagogical structures helped them understand the academic vocabulary and concepts.

Teacher Modeling

One way that teachers can mediate student learning is through modeling (Alfassi, 2004; Fisher & Frey, 2009; Freeman & Freeman, 2011). The teacher used this pedagogical structure to model an activity that she then wanted the students to carry out on their own. In their interviews, eight of sixteen interview responses revealed that students found the teacher modeling to be helpful. One student commented about teacher modeling, “The way the teacher showed us how to do the outline was easy because she had us help her and that made me really think about what I was learning.”

Two comments made by students about teacher modeling were negative. One student simply said, “I didn’t help me.” One of the eleven comments was both positive and negative. This student said, “It was good how she helped us know what to do but I didn’t know the answers and my partner didn’t either.” Therefore, the majority of the comments that students made when asked whether it was helpful or not when the teacher modeled an activity before they had to do it themselves, were positive. Table 6 shows
assignments that included teacher modeling and students’ perceptions of this pedagogical structure.

Table 6

Teacher Modeling Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure Used</th>
<th>Student Perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal narrative essay questions</td>
<td>Students read and answer questions about personal narrative essays</td>
<td>Influence Impact</td>
<td>Teacher Modeling</td>
<td>5 Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay Outline</td>
<td>Students wrote their own outline, which they shared with the class.</td>
<td>Outline, Characters, Setting, Impact</td>
<td>Teacher modeling Student Presentation</td>
<td>2 Positive 1 Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Narrative Essay</td>
<td>Students wrote a personal narrative essay.</td>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Teacher modeling</td>
<td>3 Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentative Essay Outline</td>
<td>Students worked together to help each other make their own outlines.</td>
<td>Argument, topic sentence, conclusion</td>
<td>Teacher modeling Teacher modeling</td>
<td>2 Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking, Thinking, Action, Seeing Identification</td>
<td>Students identified talking, action, thinking, and seeing in a personal narrative.</td>
<td>Talking seeing, action, thinking</td>
<td>Teacher modeling</td>
<td>1 Positive 1 Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figurative Language in a Song</td>
<td>Identify the figurative language in the song</td>
<td>Simile Metaphor Hyperbole Personification</td>
<td>Teacher Modeling</td>
<td>2 Negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guided discussion.

In five of the 23 assignments from this study, guided discussion was a pedagogical structure that was used. Bruner (1985) and Cazden (1992) argue that using scaffolds such as guided discussions helps learners to understand important concepts. The teacher used guided discussion to either introduce or review academic vocabulary or concepts. In their interviews, students’ commented 12 times about guided discussions. All of the comments were positive. When asked about how guided discussion helped her to understand important academic vocabulary and concepts, one student said, “It was good because we were giving each other ideas.” In referring to the discussion on idioms, another student more specifically commented, “The discussion helped me because it reminded me of more idioms so I could pick one for the project.” Table 7 shows assignments that included guided discussion and students’ perceptions of this pedagogical structure.
Table 7

*Guided Discussion Assignments*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure Used</th>
<th>Student Perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Un Faite (book chapter)</td>
<td>As the teacher reads the chapter aloud, students discuss events, characters, etc.</td>
<td>Evidence, event, main character, conflict</td>
<td>Guided Discussion</td>
<td>2 Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence Essay</td>
<td>Students wrote an essay about a time someone had a positive influence in their lives.</td>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>Guided Discussion</td>
<td>3 Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idiom Project</td>
<td>Students were asked to pick one idiom, draw the literal meaning and then explain its meaning</td>
<td>Idiom</td>
<td>Guided Discussion</td>
<td>2 Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Hunger Games</em> Summary and Quotes</td>
<td>Write a summary and identify talking, action, thinking, and seeing examples from the chapter</td>
<td><em>Summary, talking, action, thinking, seeing</em></td>
<td>Guided discussion</td>
<td>1 Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentative Essay Analysis</td>
<td>Students identified topic sentences, details, and the conclusion of an argumentative essay.</td>
<td><em>Topic sentence, conclusion</em></td>
<td>Guided discussion</td>
<td>2 Positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Group Work**

In six of the assignments in this study, students participated in different group work assignments. Students who participate in cooperative learning such as group work have more opportunities to be successful (Freeman & Freeman, 2011; Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Marzano, 2001). Marzano found that cooperative learning also had an effect size of .78 when it was compared with instructional strategies in which students worked on tasks individually. The teacher had students work in groups to work together to complete assignments or create projects. In the student interviews, there were 16 comments made about group work. Nine comments were positive. One student said, “I liked working with the group because we gave each other ideas.” Seven comments were negative. In some instances, students perceived that the group work was not helpful because others in their group did not understand the academic vocabulary or concepts that assignments focused on. In one specific assignment in which there was a review of figurative language, one student commented, “The group work didn’t help because no one in my group understood what to do except me.” Therefore, the overall comments about group work were mixed. Table 8 shows the assignments that included group work.
## Table 8

*Group Work Assignments*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure Used</th>
<th>Student Perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal narrative essay questions</td>
<td>Students read and answer questions about personal narrative essays</td>
<td><em>Influence</em>, <em>Impact</em></td>
<td>Group Work</td>
<td>5 Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Whistle</td>
<td>Students work together to answer questions about the story</td>
<td><em>Chronological</em>, <em>image</em>, <em>quote</em>, <em>define</em>, <em>synonym</em>, <em>antonym</em></td>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>1 Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentative Essay Outline</td>
<td>Students worked together to help each other make their own outlines.</td>
<td><em>Argument</em>, <em>topic sentence</em>, <em>conclusion</em></td>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>3 Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Hunger Games</em> Summary and Quotes</td>
<td>Write a summary and identify <em>talking</em>, <em>action</em>, <em>thinking</em>, and <em>seeing</em> examples from the chapter</td>
<td><em>Summary</em>, <em>talking</em>, <em>action</em>, <em>thinking</em>, <em>seeing</em></td>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>2 Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie Poster</td>
<td>Students chose their favorite movie and wrote about the movies elements such as <em>protagonist</em> and <em>antagonist</em>.</td>
<td><em>Protagonist</em>, <em>antagonist</em>, <em>conflict</em>, <em>setting</em>, <em>summary</em></td>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>1 Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Newspaper</td>
<td>Students worked in groups to write about their favorite character.</td>
<td>Character, <em>Words to describe people</em>, <em>quotes</em>, <em>summary</em></td>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>3 Positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partner Work

Students worked with partners in three of the assignments from this study. Partner work can be especially effective for ELLs since students with lower English skills can work with students who know more English (Freeman & Freeman, 2011). Students were asked to work in partners to complete assignments in which they were reviewing important academic vocabulary and concepts. Table 9 shows assignments that included partner work and students’ perceptions of this pedagogical structure.

Table 9

*Partner Work Assignments*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure Used</th>
<th>Student Perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Un Faite</td>
<td>As the teacher reads the chapter aloud, students discuss events, characters, etc.</td>
<td>Evidence, event, main character, conflict</td>
<td>Partner work</td>
<td>1 Positive 1 Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying Tone</td>
<td>Students read paragraphs and then decided on tone words to describe the paragraphs. They also pulled out words or phrases that best represented that tone.</td>
<td>tone</td>
<td>Partner work</td>
<td>3 Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firework Figurative Language</td>
<td>Identify the figurative language in the song</td>
<td>Simile Metaphor Hyperbole Personification</td>
<td>Partner Work</td>
<td>2 Negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Seven comments were made about partner work. Only one comment was positive, “My partner helped me decide what the tone could be if I wasn’t sure.” The other six answers regarding partner work were negative. One student stated, “I didn’t know the answers and my partner didn’t either.” Overall, student perceptions about partner work were negative.

**Independent Work**

Fisher and Frey (2009) believe that the main reason that teachers should use different pedagogical structures is to prepare students to work independently.

Seventeen comments were made about the nine assignments that students did independently. Students worked independently on daily work, assignments where they were reviewing academic vocabulary and concepts as well as on tests and quizzes. Table 10 shows assignments that included independent work and students’ perceptions of this pedagogical structure.
Table 10

*Independent Work Assignments*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure Used</th>
<th>Student Perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Onomatopoeia</td>
<td>Students worked independently to identify onomatopoeia</td>
<td><em>Onomatopoeia</em></td>
<td>Independent work</td>
<td>2 Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figurative Language Paragraph</td>
<td>Students wrote a paragraph that included personification, simile, hyperbole, and onomatopoeia</td>
<td><em>personification, simile, hyperbole onomatopoeia</em></td>
<td>Independent work</td>
<td>2 Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hunger Games Test</td>
<td>Students took a test after reading a few chapters from <em>The Hunger Games</em></td>
<td><em>Simile, primary, tone-other figurative language</em></td>
<td>Independent work</td>
<td>3 Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence Essay</td>
<td>Students wrote an essay about a time someone had a positive influence in their lives.</td>
<td><em>Influence</em></td>
<td>Independent work</td>
<td>2 Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idiom Project</td>
<td>Students were asked to pick one idiom, draw the literal meaning and then explain its meaning</td>
<td><em>Idiom</em></td>
<td>Independent work</td>
<td>1 Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay Outline and Personal Narrative</td>
<td>Students wrote their own outline, which they shared with the class. After receiving feedback, students revised</td>
<td><em>Outline, Characters, Setting, Impact</em></td>
<td>Independent Work</td>
<td>2 Positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
outlines and wrote a personal narrative based on the outline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Literature Type</th>
<th>独立</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Hunger Games Chapter 2 Test</td>
<td>Students took a quiz after reading independently</td>
<td>Quote, Character</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hunger Games Chapter 9 Quiz</td>
<td>Students took a quiz after reading a chapter independently</td>
<td>Quote</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hunger Games Chapter 10</td>
<td>Students drew a scene from the chapter in chronological order</td>
<td>Scenes, chronological order</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nine of the answers from the student interviews about independent work were positive. One student said, “It was ok. I knew how to do it and the teacher helped me when I had questions.” Six comments were negative. As one student noted, “It did not help me. If we could have reviewed the words first or been able to help each other, it would have been better.” Two of the student’s answers were both positive and negative. One of these comments was, “It was ok because I know the idioms but maybe with a partner I could have checked my answers.

In the next section, I describe the individual students’ perceptions of each pedagogical structure.

**Individual Students’ Perceptions of the Pedagogical Structures**

In the following section, sub-question, “What are the students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures that are used?” will be addressed in more detail. The perceptions each interviewed participant had about the different pedagogical structures will be
presented. All six long-term English learner described in Chapter three are included below. The information is drawn from the interview question, “In today’s assignment, you (here I inserted the pedagogical structure or pedagogical structures that were used for the assignment). How did this help you or not help you to understand (Here I inserted the academic vocabulary or concept that was the focus of the assignment)?” For each student, I will describe how many assignments they participated in, how many times they participated in each pedagogical structure, and their perceptions of the different pedagogical structures.

**Alejandro**

Alejandro, participated in fifteen of the twenty-three assignments. Although he participated in all of the pedagogical structures, there were some pedagogical structures in which he was more engaged in than in others as is made clear in the description below. Overall, Alejandro participated in three assignments that involved teacher modeling, four with guided discussion, five with group work, two with partner work, and eight independent assignments.

Three assignments that Alejandro was involved in included teacher modeling. Two of his comments about teacher modeling were positive and one was negative. The positive comments were fairly general rather than specific. For example, in one assignment, the teacher modeled how to make an outline for an argumentative essay so that the students could then write their own outline. For this assignment, Alejandro said about the teacher modeling, “It helped me a lot.”

On another assignment, the teacher modeled how to find figurative language in a song. When asked about how this helped him or did not help him to understand the
figurative language, Alejandro elaborated more in his answer, “It didn’t help me. I was even confused about what to do and the way the words were in the song made it hard for me to understand the figurative language.

All of Alejandro’s answers about the four guided discussion assignments he participated in were positive. In one assignment, the class discussed personal narrative essays in order to help them see how the essays were either on or off the topic of influence. When asked if this discussion helped him to understand the concept of influence he said, “It helped when the teacher gave examples and let us ask questions.”

Alejandro participated in five assignments that involved group work. He had positive perceptions of this pedagogical structure in three assignments and a negative perception in two assignments. In an assignment in which students reviewed story elements through searching for textual evidence in a story, Alejandro commented about the group work, “It was good because it helped us find good quotes.” In another assignment students were also reviewing story elements by creating a movie poster in groups. About that assignment, Alejandro stated, “The group work didn’t really help because a lot of people in the group were not really trying.”

Two assignments that Alejandro participated in involved partner work. Alejandro had one positive comment and one negative comment about this pedagogical structure. In a assignment in which students had to work with a partner to identify the tone of several paragraphs, Alejandro specifically commented on his understanding of tone, “I already understand it but my partner helped me decide what the tone could be if I wasn’t sure.”

In the same assignment that was mentioned in the teacher modeling pedagogical structure, Alejandro not only felt that the teacher modeling was not helpful but he felt that
working with a partner after the teacher modeling was not helpful either. When asked about how the teacher modeling and or group work helped him to understand figurative language, Alejandro said, “It didn’t help me. I was even confused about what to do and the way the words were in the song made it hard for me to understand the figurative language.”

Since the teacher wanted to assess the progress the students had made throughout the year, several of the assignments the students participated in were to be completed independently. Therefore, the pedagogical structure that Alejandro participated in the most was independent work. He participated in eight assignments that involved some type of independent work. By looking at his interview answers, it is clear that he had a positive perception of independent work in five assignments, and mixed perceptions in three assignments.

Several of the independent assignments were tests or quizzes. On a quiz where students were being tested on story elements and textual evidence based on a chapter in a novel they were reading. When asked about how working independently helped or did not help him with story elements and textual evidence he commented, “It was ok because I had already read the chapter.”

In the three assignments in which Alejandro had mixed perceptions, he was overall positive about understanding the academic vocabulary and concepts but didn’t feel he had enough time to complete the assignments. For example, on a quiz on a chapter from a novel, students were reviewing story elements and chronological order. Alejandro stated about working independently, “It was ok but I was checking in the book as I was doing the assignment and it took me a little while.”
Looking at all of the pedagogical structures overall, Alejandro had positive perceptions about the pedagogical structures helping him understand the academic vocabulary and concepts fifteen times, negative perceptions about the pedagogical structures three times, and mixed perceptions three times. Alejandro was both positive and negative about all of the pedagogical structures except for guided discussion that he was one hundred percent positive about.

Silvia

Silvia participated in eight assignments during this study. Some of the assignments included multiple pedagogical structures and therefore, in her interview answers, Silvia often commented on more than one pedagogical structure. She participated in one assignment that included teacher modeling, three assignments with guided discussions, three assignments with group work, and five assignments in which she worked independently.

Silvia was only involved in one of the assignments that included teacher modeling. In the assignment, the teacher modeled how to write an outline for a personal narrative essay. Silvia’s perception of the teacher modeling was positive, “The way she showed us how to do the outline was easy because she had us help her and made me really think about what I was learning.”

Although Silvia participated in three assignments that involved guided discussions, she only commented on one. The discussion for that assignment focused on how to find the topic sentences in an argumentative essay. The class also discussed argumentative essay topics. Silvia’s perception of the discussion was positive. She stated, “It was good because we were giving each other ideas.”
Of the four group work assignments that she participated in, Silvia had all positive perceptions. In one assignment that involved group work, students were asked to summarize a chapter from a novel they had read. They also worked together to look for textual evidence from the story in order to identify talking, thinking, action, and seeing in the chapter. Silvia commented about the group work, “It helped a lot to work with my group because we were deciding together if something was talking or thinking or whatever and that made it easier for me.”

Silvia was also positive about four of the assignments she participated in that included independent work. In one assignment, students took a quiz on a chapter they had read from a novel. For the quiz, students were asked to use textual evidence from the chapter to answer questions. Silvia’s perception of doing this assignment independently was positive, “It helped me that I read the chapter because I knew the answers and I knew where the quotes were already.”

On one assignment that she did independently, Silvia’s perception was negative. In the assignment, students had a quiz about a chapter from a novel. For the quiz, students were given several quotes from a chapter they had been assigned to read. They were asked to explain how each quote related to the story. When asked how working independently helped or did not help her to respond to the quotes, Silvia responded, “I didn’t read the chapter so I don’t know what to say about the quotes.”

Overall, Silvia made nine positive comments and one negative comment about assignments she participated in. Silvia was one hundred percent positive about all of the pedagogical structures she participated in except for independent work.

Josue
Josue participated in nine assignments. He commented three times on teacher modeling, three on group work, twice on partner work, and three times on independent work. Although he did participate in assignments that included guided discussions, he did not make any specific comments about those discussions in his answers to the interview questions.

Josue made positive comments about all of the assignments he participated in that involved teacher modeling. In one assignment, the teacher explained to the students that good writers use talking, thinking, action, and seeing when they are writing. She modeled how to identify these four features within a well-written essay. She then asked the students to do the same so that they could then discuss how these features contributed to the success to the essays. When asked if the teacher modeling helped or did not help him understand these ideas the teacher was presenting, he said, “It helped me because she was doing it in front of the class and then she had us help her and that helped me understand how to do it.”

There were three comments that Josue made about group work. Two were negative, and one mixed. In one assignment, students identified figurative language in a story they had read. When asked about his perception of the group work Josue stated, “We did not start working when we had to and then time ran out so it was our own fault.”

In another assignment, students were asked to work in groups to write an outline for an argumentative essay. When asked about whether the group work helped him to understand the idea of influence, Josue answered, “The group gave me some ideas about what to write but I was tired at the end and I didn’t really know what to put for the
conclusion.” Therefore, the group work helped him with all of the elements of the conclusion except the conclusion.

The two partner assignments that Josue mentioned in his interviews were negative. In both assignments, neither Josue nor his partner understood the academic vocabulary or concepts the teacher was reviewing. For example, in one assignment, students were asked to identify the tone of several paragraphs by using a list of tone words they had reviewed throughout the year. When asked about how working with a partner helped or did not help him to understand tone, Josue said, “My partner did not know how to do it and I really didn’t understand the tone words we had to pick from.”

Josue was positive about one assignment he worked on independently and negative about two. On a quiz relating to a chapter the students had been assigned to read, students were asked to describe story elements in the chapter. When asked how working independently helped or did not help him with describing the story elements Josue stated, “I didn’t read the chapter so I copied the answers.”

In another assignment, Josue’s perception was more positive. On another quiz on a different chapter from the same book, students were asked to use textual evidence to answer questions. When asked how working independently helped or did not help him to understand textual evidence, Josue responded, “It helped me that I read the chapter because then I could answer the questions super easy.”

Overall, Josue had positive perceptions about the pedagogical structures four times, negative perceptions six times, and mixed perceptions one time. While Josue has mixed perceptions about group and independent work, he was one hundred percent positive about teacher modeling and one hundred percent negative about partner work.
David

David participated in ten assignments. He commented on all of the different pedagogical structures. He answered the interview questions about teacher modeling three times, guided discussion two times, group work three times, and independent work three times. His perceptions about these different pedagogical structures varied in the different assignments.

Three of the pedagogical structure comments David made were about teacher modeling. Two comments were positive and one was mixed. In one assignment, the teacher modeled how to write an outline for an argumentative essay. Daniel had a positive perception of the assignment and felt it did help him understand how to write his own outline, “When she did an outline in front of the class with us it was good. I had learned how to do that before and she helped me remember exactly how to do it.”

In a assignment in which the teacher modeled how to identify figurative language in a song, David was asked how the modeling helped or did not help him to identify the figurative language himself. David responded, “It was good how she helped us know what to do but I didn’t know the answers and my partner didn’t either.” Therefore, the pedagogical structure helped him understand what to do but did not help him to understand the figurative language.

For the assignments that David commented on that involved guided discussions, he was positive about one and negative about the other. When the class had a discussion about how to analyze an essay about the topic of influence, David said, “It was good because we helped each other if we weren’t sure but I think it was easy. For another assignment, the class had a discussion about a story they had read. After the discussion,
they were asked to write about story elements. When asked if the discussion helped or did not help him to understand story elements, David explained, “I was talking and I didn’t really know what to do.”

When David commented about group work, he was positive twice and negative once. When students worked together to create a newspaper based on a character from a novel they were reading, David said, “I liked to work in the group because the other people in the group were helping me find quotes.” In the same story elements assignment mentioned above, David commented specifically about working with a group, “My group was not trying.” This would indicate that the group work was not helping him to understand the story elements.

David only made one comment about partner work. This comment was made after an assignment in which the students were reviewing figurative language. Specifically, they were asked to identify the figurative language in a song. When asked about how working with a partner helped him or did not help him to identify figurative language, David said, “I didn’t know the answers and my partner didn’t either.”

Out of the three comments David made about working independently, his perceptions were negative two times and mixed once. On a test covering several chapters from a novel the students were reading, students were asked questions about figurative language in the story. When asked how working independently helped or did not help him with the figurative language, David answered, “Since I did not read, I could not do the test by myself. Maybe if we could have talked about the chapter first I would have been able to guess better.” When students had a quiz in order to review idioms, David
had mixed perceptions about working independently, “It was ok because I know the
idioms but maybe with a partner I could have checked my answers.”

Overall, five of David’s perceptions of the pedagogical structures were positive,
five were negative, and two were mixed. David’s only comment about group work was
negative but when discussing the other pedagogical structures, he was both positive and
negative.

Roman

Out of the twenty-three assignments that students participated in for this study,
Roman participated in 13. He commented four times about teacher modeling, two times
about guided discussions, three times about group work, once about partner work, and six
times about working independently.

Overall, Roman had a positive perception of teacher modeling. He made three
positive comments and one negative comment. In one assignment, the teacher modeled
how to make an outline for a personal narrative essay. When asked how the modeling
helped or did not help him with the story elements he needed to include in his own
outline, Roman said, “When the teacher showed us how to do the outline, we had to take
notes and then I used the notes when I made one.”

In an assignment in which the teacher modeled how to identify figurative
language in a song, Raul had a negative perception about the teacher modeling, “I didn’t
understand what to do. I was confused and my partner was not even paying attention so I
just put whatever.”

Roman had positive perceptions about both assignments that he commented on
that included guided discussion. In one assignment, the teacher engaged the students in a
discussion about the features of an argumentative essay. When asked whether the
discussion helped him understand and in a follow up activity identify the different parts
of an argumentative essay, Roman replied, “It was good because we helped each other if
we weren’t sure but I think it was easy.”

Out of three comments that Roman made about group work, two were positive
and one was negative. In a assignment where students were asked to identify talking,
action, thinking, and seeing in a chapter of a novel they were reading, he was asked how
working in a group helped him or did not help him. Roman answered, “It helped me to be
with my group because sometimes I was not too sure about what a sentence was and then
I would ask my group and they would tell me what they thought about it.” In other words,
if Roman was reading a sentence and he thought that sentence would be an example of
talking, he would verify this with his group members.

When students were asked to read personal narrative essays and then explain how
the essays focused on the topic of influence, Roman did not feel that working in a group
was helpful. He stated, “The group work didn’t really help me because everyone was just
talking.”

Roman only commented on one assignment that he participated in that included
partner work. His perception was negative. When students were asked to identify
figurative language in a song with a partner, Roman’s perception was that working with a
partner did not help him to understand the figurative language, “I was confused and my
partner was not even paying attention so I just put whatever.”

Six comments that Roman made were specifically about working independently.
Four comments were positive and two were negative. Overall, when he was working with
academic vocabulary or concepts he was comfortable with, his perceptions were positive. In an assignment where he was asked to write an argumentative essay outline and include topic sentences, Roman commented about working independently, “It was ok because we had already done it a lot of times so I know how to do it.”

Roman had a more negative perception about working independently when he had to identify figurative language in a test. He stated, “It did not help me. If we could have reviewed the words first or been able to help each other, it would have been better.” Therefore, when he was comfortable with the academic vocabulary or concepts he was positive and when he was not, his perception of working independently was negative.

Of the 16 times that Roman commented on the pedagogical structures, he was positive 11 times and negative four times. When discussing group work, independent work, and teacher modeling, he had both positive and negative perceptions. When commenting on guided discussions, he was positive and when asked about partner work, he was negative.

**Abdiel**

Abdiel participated in nine of the 23 assignments. He commented on all of the different pedagogical structures. He specifically gave his perceptions on teacher modeling two times, guided discussions once, group work three times, partner work once, and independent work four times.

Both comments that Abdiel made about teacher modeling were positive. When the teacher modeled how to write an outline for an argumentative essay, Abdiel was very positive. When asked if the teacher modeling helped him to understand how to write an
outline for an argumentative essay, Abdiel replied, “It helped me a lot because the teacher did an outline for us and then I totally knew how to do it.

Only one comment Abdiel made was geared specifically toward his perception of guided discussions. Again he was very positive about this pedagogical structure. When the class had a discussion about common idioms before doing an idiom project, Abdiel was asked whether the discussion helped him to understand idioms. Abdiel answered, “The discussion helped me because it reminded me of more idioms so I could pick one for the project.”

Abdiel was also one hundred percent positive when he commented on group work. In one assignment, students were asked to work in a group to read personal narrative essays and identify how the topic of influence was used. Abdiel perceived the group as an asset, “I already understood but I liked working with the group because we were giving each other ideas.”

The one comment Abdiel made about partner work was negative. When students were asked to identify the tone of several paragraphs, he did not perceive that working with a partner helped him to understand tone. In his interview answer, he stated, “My partner didn’t know how to do it and I didn’t really understand the tone words we had to pick from.”

Abdiel was both positive and negative about working independently. His comments were mostly negative—he perceived that working independently did not help him 3 times and that it did help him once. For the most part, Abdiel had a difficult time working independently when they had quizzes or tests that he was not prepared for. On a quiz for a chapter in a novel that had been assigned as homework, students were asked to
read quotes from the chapter and then explained how the quotes related to the story events. When asked how working independently helped or did not help him with this assignment, Abdiel answered, “I didn’t read the chapter so I didn’t know anything.”

On the assignment that Abdiel had a positive perception of working independently, students were asked to write an outline for an argumentative essay. About working independently, Abdiel commented, “It was ok. I knew how to do it and the teacher helped me when I had questions.”

Abdiel’s answers reflected positive perceptions seven times and negative perceptions four times. For the most part, Abdiel was mostly either positive or negative about the different pedagogical structures. He was one hundred percent positive about group work guided discussions, and teacher modeling. He was one hundred percent negative about partner work. He had both positive and negative perceptions of working independently.

Students’ Understanding of Academic concepts and vocabulary and Concepts

Overview

In order to address the sub-question, “How did the students’ work reflect their understanding of the academic concepts and vocabulary that were taught?” I created a document review chart after collecting all of the artifacts from the students. The chart was created to summarize students’ performance on each assignment based on the rubric. In addition, I drew from information from their first interview question, “In today’s assignment, you reviewed (here I inserted the academic vocabulary or concepts they reviewed). In your own words, explain what you understand about these topics.”
Therefore, I used information from both the students’ assignments and the interview answers in this section.

The assignments that I collected were organized into five categories: Essay Practice (this included analyzing essays, writing essay outlines, and writing essays), Reviews, Short Stories, Novels, and Projects. Table 11 shows the five categories that assignments were organized into as well as how many artifacts were collected for each one.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Categories</th>
<th>Essay Writing</th>
<th>Reviews</th>
<th>Short Stories</th>
<th>Novels</th>
<th>Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of assignments</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of artifacts</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below, I explain each assignment I provide a rubric showing how each assignment was evaluated. The rubric also includes the students’ interview responses. I created these rubrics for each assignment in order to determine whether students were successful, partly successful, or unsuccessful on each assignment. Then for each of the three success levels on the rubrics, I used percentages to determine the success of each assignment that students completed. Thus, I was able to support the qualitative information I gathered with this quantitative data for the assignments. In addition, I provide a narrative describing students’ understanding of the academic concepts and vocabulary.

It is important to note that not all students participated in all of the assignments. In some cases, students were absent and missed the assignment. In other cases, the students
were in class but did not turn in their work. In a few cases, not all classes participated in the assignments and therefore, not all of the students in the study participated in all of the assignments. This happened when one class fell behind the others.

In the following sections, I introduce each assignment category, present the rubric for each assignment within that category, give a detailed description of each assignment, and provide a narrative describing individual student’s success levels.

**Essays**

Six of the 21 assignments that I used in this study, focused on essay writing. In four assignments, the teacher focused on the personal narrative essay. Two essay assignments were geared toward writing an argumentative essay. Within the six assignments that focused on essay writing, 21 student-writing artifacts were collected. Out of those 21 artifacts, students were successful on 11, partially successful on 10, and unsuccessful with one.

**Influence and impact questions.**

Six artifacts were collected from assignments in which students were asked to read five well-written personal narrative essays. The essays were written about the topic of influence and impact. The assignment began with the teacher modeling what she wanted the students to do. As a class, they worked together to read a personal narrative essay and then answer questions relating to the topic of the essays, influence and impact. That is, in these essays a character was influenced or impacted by another character or an event. After the teacher modeled the assignment, students worked in groups to read several more essays and answer questions about how the essays were focused on the topics of influence and impact. By answering the questions, students showed their
understanding of the concepts and the academic vocabulary *influence* and *impact* Table 12 shows how students were evaluated for this assignment.

Table 12

_Influence and Impact Questions Rubric_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correctly answer at least 80% of the questions about <em>influence</em> and <em>impact</em>. Correctly explain the concepts of <em>influence</em> and <em>impact</em> when answering the interview question.</td>
<td>Correctly answer at least 60% of the questions about <em>influence</em> and <em>impact</em>. Correctly explain either <em>influence</em> or <em>impact</em> correctly when answering interview question,</td>
<td>Correctly answer less than 60% of the questions about <em>influence</em> and <em>impact</em>. Not able to explain <em>influence</em> or <em>impact</em> when answering interview question.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.

Table 13

_Students’ Understanding of Influence and Impact_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal narrative essay questions</td>
<td>Students read and answer questions about personal narrative essays</td>
<td>Influence Impact</td>
<td>Teacher Modeling Group Work Guided discussion</td>
<td>Correctly answer questions about personal narrative essays they were given. Questions included- Who impacted whom? In what way?</td>
<td>6 Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alejandro.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Alejandro was successful with the assignment. Through his answers about the essays, Alejandro showed that he understood how each essay focused on influence or impact. For example, when asked about one of the essays, “Who was influenced by whom?” Alejandro responded appropriately “Jennifer was influenced by Joe.” Then in a follow up question he was asked, “In what way did he/she influence the other person?” Alejandro answered, “Joe made her do drugs.” When interviewed about the assignment, Alejandro was asked to describe influence and impact in his own words. He explained, “Influence is when someone affects you in some way. Impact is the same idea but it seems stronger.”

Josue.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Josue was successful with this assignment since he answered all of the questions about the essays correctly. For example, when asked about one essay, “Who was influenced by whom?” Josue correctly answered, “Jennifer Mary Scott by Joe McMalin.” His answer to the next question, “In what way did he/she influence the other person?” He again responded correctly, “Inviting to Jennifer go to the party and make her do drugs.” When asked to explain in his own words what he understood about influence and impact, Josue answered, “The words are almost the same as Spanish so they are easy for me to understand. It’s when someone does something that you don’t forget because it changes you.”
Silvia.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Silvia was successful with this assignment. She answered all of the questions correctly. For example, when asked, “Who impacted whom?” She responded correctly, “Lynette impacted Christian’s life.” In a follow up question, “In what way?” She answered, “Lynette got Christian onto the right path by changing his attitude of school.” When asked to describe influence and impact during her interview, Silvia responded, “I already understood those words but now I know I can use them in an essay.”

David.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, David was successful with this assignment since he answered all of the questions correctly. For example, when he was asked about one essay, “Who was influenced by whom?” David responded, “Jennifer Mary Scott was influenced by Joe.” In a follow up question, “In what way did he/she influence the other person?” David wrote, “Joe influenced Jennifer with drugs.” These answers were both correct. When asked to define influence and impact during his interview, David said, “I understand that it is when someone changes your life.”

Roman.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Roman was successful with the assignment. He answered the questions correctly. When asked, “Who was influenced by whom in one question, he correctly answered, “Ricardo was influenced by Roberto”. In the follow up question, “In what way did he/she influence the other person?”
He also correctly answered, “Roberto influenced Ricardo by helping him to leave the drugs.”

When asked what he understood about the academic vocabulary and concepts from the assignment, he responded, “Those words are about someone changing the direction of your life. It could be good or bad but in this essay, it was supposed to be in a good way.”

*Abdiel.*

According to the rubric to evaluate this assignment, Abdiel was successful with the assignment since he answered all of the questions correctly. For example, on the question, “Who influenced whom?” Abdiel responded, “Joe influenced Jen.” In the follow up question, “In what way did he/she influence the other person?” He correctly answered, “Using drugs.” When asked what he understood about the academic vocabulary and concepts from this assignment he answered, “They mean that when someone does something and that in some way affects you.”

**Talking, thinking, action, seeing.**

In another assignment, the teacher wanted the students to understand that good writers include thinking, talking, action, and seeing in their writing. The academic vocabulary used to refer to these concepts were *thinking, action, talking,* and *seeing* used in this specialized sense. To evaluate students’ understanding of these concepts and this vocabulary, she modeled reading a well-written essay and used different colors to identify the talking, action, thinking, and seeing. She then asked the students to do the same thing independently. Table 14 shows how this assignment was evaluated.
Table 14

*Talking, Thinking, Action and Seeing Rubric*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correctly identifies at least 80% of the talking, thinking, seeing, and action in the essay. Correctly explains at least 80% of what <em>talking</em>, <em>seeing</em>, <em>thinking</em>, and <em>action</em> refer to in interview question.</td>
<td>Correctly identifies at least 70% of the talking, thinking, seeing, and action in the essay. Correctly explains at least 70% of what <em>talking</em>, <em>thinking</em>, <em>seeing</em>, and <em>action</em> refers to in the interview question.</td>
<td>Correctly identifies less than 70% of the talking, seeing, action, and thinking in the essay. Correctly explains less than 70% of what <em>talking</em>, <em>thinking</em>, <em>seeing</em>, and <em>action</em> refer to in the interview question.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.

Table 15

*Students’ Understanding of Talking, Thinking, Action, Seeing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talking, Thinking, Action, Seeing Identification</td>
<td>Students identified talking, action, thinking, and seeing in a personal narrative.</td>
<td><em>Talking</em>, <em>seeing</em>, <em>action</em>, <em>thinking</em></td>
<td>Teacher modeling</td>
<td>Use different color highlighters or crayons to identify talking, action, thinking, and seeing in a personal narrative essay.</td>
<td>1 Successful 1 Partially Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Josue.

According to the rubric used to evaluate the assignment, Josue was successful with this assignment.

As an example of action, he highlighted, “As I walked up to my grandma’s house” and as an example of talking he highlighted “She offered me a glass of milk.” When asked to describe this academic vocabulary, Josue said, “When you want to get a high score on the essay you have to put thinking, talking, action and seeing. Like what are the people thinking, what do they say, what are they doing, and what do they see.”

Abdiel.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Abdiel was partially successful with the assignment.

Some talking, thinking, seeing, and action he identifies correctly. For example, he identifies “We got materials and started working” as action but he incorrectly identified “In the car she said thanks for helping” as thinking instead of talking. When asked about the academic vocabulary from this assignment, Abdiel responded, “Talking is what they say, thinking is what they think about, seeing is when they describe what they see, and action is when they are physically moving or doing something.”

Character, setting, summary, impact essay.

Another assignment focused on writing an outline for a personal narrative essay focused on how one person can have an impact in your life. On the outline students were asked to list characters, setting, and then write a summary of their story with a clear beginning and end. The teacher began the assignment by modeling how to write an outline for the students. Next, students wrote their own outlines. This assignment was
designed to reinforce the concepts and academic terms: *character, setting, and impact*.

Table 16 shows how students were evaluated on the outline.

Table 16

*Character, Setting, Summary, Impact Rubric*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answers at least 80% of the questions about characters, setting, and writes a summary with an identifiable beginning, middle, and end. Correctly defines at least 80% of the story elements and the concept of <em>impact</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Answers at least 60% of the questions about characters, setting, and writes a summary with at least two identifiable parts. Correctly defines at least 60% of the story elements and the concept of <em>impact</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Answers less than 60% of the questions about characters, setting, and is not able to write a summary with a beginning, middle, and end. Correctly defines less than 60% of story elements and the concept of <em>impact</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.
### Table 17

**Student’ Understanding of Character, Setting, Summary, Impact**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay Outline</td>
<td>Students wrote their own outline, which they shared with the class.</td>
<td>Outline, Characters, Setting, Impact</td>
<td>Teacher modeling Independent Work Student Presentation</td>
<td>Write an outline for a personal narrative essay that focused on the topic “Write about how a person can have an impact on your life”.</td>
<td>2 Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Roman.*

According to the rubric used to evaluate the assignment, Roman was successful with his outline.

Roman wrote his outline about a teacher who was helping him be more successful in school. When asked to define influence in his interview, Roman answered, “Influence is when you are changed.”

*Silvia.*

According to the rubric used to evaluate the assignment, Silvia wrote a successful essay outline. She wrote an outline for an instant message conversation between two girls. The first girl is complaining about her mother.
Influence and impact.

Using the outline described above, students were asked to write a personal narrative essay on the topic, “The influence another person can have on your life.” For another assignment, students write a similar essay, “Write about the impact another person can have on your life.” Students worked independently on these essays. These essays were designed to reinforce and review the concepts and academic vocabulary: influence and impact as well as the concepts and vocabulary of talking, action, thinking, and seeing. Table 18 shows how students were evaluated on both essays.

Table 18

Influence and Impact Essays Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay is on topic, has a clear beginning, middle, and end, is creative, includes talking, action, thinking, and seeing.</td>
<td>Essay is on topic, has a clear beginning, middle, and end, Essay includes at least two of the four elements: talking action, thinking, and seeing.</td>
<td>Essay is off topic or does not have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Essay includes fewer than two of the four elements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.
Table 19

*Students’ Understanding of Influence and Impact*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence Essay</td>
<td>Students wrote an essay about a time someone had a positive influence in their lives.</td>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>Brainstorm, examples, discussion, individual work</td>
<td>Write an essay about how a person had a positive influence on their lives.</td>
<td>2 Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Not Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Roman.**

According to the rubric used to evaluate the assignment, Roman was successful. His essay was on topic and interesting but he did not have a clear ending.

Roman wrote his essay about a teacher who was helping him be more successful in school. He ends the essay, “The thing I hate it the most I have never pass a writing TAKS since the day I came from Matamoros.” This is not a clear ending because although he writes about how the teacher tries to help him, he is not clear about what influence it had on him. When asked to define *influence* in his interview, Roman answered, “*Influence* is when you are changed.”

**Silvia.**

According to the rubric used to evaluate the assignment, Silvia wrote a successful essay. She wrote an instant message conversation between two girls. The first girl is complaining about her mother. The other girl tells her that she lost her mother and wishes she had appreciated her more. At the end of the essay, the first girl tells the other, “I
know you are right and I am going to talk to her, tell her I am sorry for all the pain I made her go through.”

Through the essay she shows how the second girl impacted the first girl by helping her to appreciate her mother. When asked to describe impact in her interview, Silvia answered that, “Impact is how you can be changed because of something or someone who can affect you.”

Abdiel.

According to the rubric used to evaluate the assignment, Abdiel was not successful on the essay. He attempted to write an essay about how his girlfriend helped him stop drinking. He was not creative, and his story did not have a clear beginning, middle, and end. When asked about the academic vocabulary for this assignment, Abdiel responded, “Impact is when someone makes a big shock onto your life.”

Topic sentence.

Two essay assignments focused on argumentative essays. On the first assignment, students were given two argumentative essays and asked to highlight the topic sentences of each paragraph. The teacher first modeled this for the students and then the students worked independently. Here, the concept and academic vocabulary being taught and evaluated was topic sentence. Table 20 shows how the students were evaluated in this assignment.
Table 20

*Topic Sentence Rubric*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correctly identifies at least 80% of the topic sentences in the essays. Correctly defines <em>topic sentence</em> when answering interview question.</td>
<td>Correctly identifies at least 70% of the topic sentences in the essays. Correctly defines <em>topic sentence</em> when answering interview question.</td>
<td>Correctly identifies less than 70% of the topic sentences in the essay. Does not define <em>topic sentence</em> when answering interview question.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.

Table 21

*Students’ Understanding of Topic Sentence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argumentative Essay Analysis</td>
<td>Students identified topic sentences, details, and the conclusion of an argumentative essay.</td>
<td><em>Topic sentence, conclusion</em></td>
<td>Group discussion</td>
<td>Identify the topic sentence, details, and conclusion from a personal narrative essay.</td>
<td>3 Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*David.*

According to the rubric used to evaluate the assignment, David was successful with the assignment. He identified all parts of the essays correctly.
For example, in one essay, he identified the thesis statement correctly, “The purpose of this essay is to persuade the reader that people shouldn’t watch too much television.” When asked to define thesis statement and topic sentence, David responded only about topic sentences, “Topic sentences are the main ideas of what you are going to argue in your essay.”

Roman.

According to the rubric used to evaluate the assignment, Roman was successful with the assignment. He identified the thesis statements such as “The purpose of this essay is to explain why there should not be ambulant salesmen in Querétaro.” As well as all of the topic sentences correctly.

When asked to define the academic vocabulary and concepts from the assignment, he answered, “The topic sentences are the main ideas. The conclusion is like a recommendation of what you are talking about.”

Silvia.

According to the rubric used to evaluate the assignment, Silvia was successful with the assignment. For example, she identified the thesis statement in one essay as, “The purpose of this essay is to explain why there should not be ambulant salesmen in Querétaro.” When asked to define the academic vocabulary from this assignment, Silvia responded, “The topic sentences are your main points of your arguments. The conclusion is saying again your main points but with different words.”

Argumentative essay outline.

Next, students were asked to write their own argumentative essay outlines. The teacher modeled the outline for the students and then asked them to write their own.
They were asked to write a thesis statement and three topic sentences as well as a recommendation. For this assignment, the academic concepts and vocabulary were 

*argumentative essay, thesis statement, topic sentence, and recommendation*. Table 22 shows how the students were evaluated on this assignment.

**Table 22**

*Argumentative Essay Outline Rubric*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correctly writes at least 80% of the outline sentences correctly. Correctly defines <em>argumentative essay, topic sentence, thesis statement, and recommendation</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Correctly writes at least 70% of the outline sentences correctly. Correctly defines <em>argumentative essay, topic sentence, thesis statement, and recommendation</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Correctly writes less than 70% of the outline sentences correctly. Does not define <em>argumentative essay, topic sentence, thesis statement, and recommendation</em> when asking interview questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.

**Table 23**

*Students’ Understanding of Argumentative Essay Outline*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argumentative Essay Outline</td>
<td>Students worked together to help each other make their own outlines.</td>
<td><em>Argument, topic sentence, conclusion</em></td>
<td>Teacher modeling, group work</td>
<td>Make an outline for their own argumentative essay.</td>
<td>3 Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Roman.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Roman wrote a successful outline. When arguing for why students should take classes during the summer instead of lengthening the school day, one of his topic sentences was, “The last reason that elective courses are better in the summer, is that you will have less distraction.”

Abdiel.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Abdiel was successful with the assignment. He wrote a thesis statement and three topic sentences.

For example, in an outline for an essay about why the school day should be lengthened instead of students having to attend summer school, Abdiel wrote as one of his topic sentences, “The first reason to extend the school day is that I have to get a job during the summer.” When asked about the academic vocabulary from this assignment, Abdiel answered, “The topic sentences are the main points of what you will write. You will need to have like three of them.”

Alejandro.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, he was successful with the assignment. For example, Alejandro began his outline with a thesis statement, “I think it is better to lengthen the school days than to spend all summer in an elective course.” Here he introduces the opinion that he will defend throughout the essay. When asked in the interview what he understood about topic sentences, Alejandro answered, “The topic sentences are the first ones in the paragraph, the main ideas.”
Reviews

Five assignments were specifically reviews of academic vocabulary and concepts. Four reviews focused on figurative language such as *similes*, *metaphors*, and *idioms*. One assignment reviewed tone. 10 artifacts were collected that were reviews. Overall, the artifacts showed that students were successful one time, partly successful seven times, and unsuccessful two times.

**Onomatopoeia.**

In one assignment, students reviewed onomatopoeia. They were asked to underline the onomatopoeia in a paragraph. Students worked independently on this assignment. There were 9 instances of onomatopoeia in the paragraph. For this assignment, the academic vocabulary was *onomatopoeia*. Table 24 shows how the students were evaluated on this assignment.

Table 24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Onomatopoeia Rubric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Successful</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correctly identifies at least 77% of the onomatopoeia in the paragraph. Correctly defines <em>onomatopoeia</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 25 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.
Table 25

Students’ Understanding of Onomatopoeia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Onomatopoeia</td>
<td>Students worked independently to identify onomatopoeia</td>
<td>Onomatopoeia</td>
<td>Independent work</td>
<td>Underline all of the onomatopoeia in a paragraph.</td>
<td>2 Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Roman.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Roman was successful with the assignment. For example, he identified, “ring, ring” as onomatopoeia. When asked to describe figurative language in his interview, he responded, “It is ways to make your essay more interesting and make people want to read what you write.”

Alejandro.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Alejandro was successful with the assignment. For example, in the first sentence of the paragraph, Alejandro correctly identified “ahhhh” as onomatopoeia since it represented the noise someone was making as they opened their mouth wide.

When asked to describe onomatopoeia in the interview, Alejandro stated, “Onomatopoeia is sounds.”

Figurative language in a song.

In another figurative language review assignment, students were given the lyrics of a song and asked to identify the figurative language in the song. The teacher first
modeled how the students would identify the figurative language in the beginning of the song and then asked them to work with a partner to identify the figurative language in the remainder of the song. The song had fourteen instances of figurative language including *similes, metaphors, personification, and hyperbole*. For this assignment, the academic vocabulary was similes, metaphors, personification, and hyperbole. Table 26 describes how this assignment was evaluated.

Table 26

*Figurative Language in a Song Rubric*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correctly identifies at least 75% of the figurative language in the song.</td>
<td>Correctly identifies at least 60% of the figurative language in the song.</td>
<td>Correctly identifies less than 60% of the figurative language in the song.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correctly defines at least 75% of the types of figurative language when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Correctly defines at least 50% of the types of figurative language when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Correctly defines less than 50% of the types of figurative language when answering interview questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 27 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.
Table 27

**Students’ Understanding of Figurative Language**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figurative Language in a Song</td>
<td>Identify the figurative language in the song</td>
<td>Simile Metaphor Hyperbole Personification</td>
<td>Teacher Modeling Partner Work</td>
<td>Underline sentences/phrases from a song and correctly identified the type of figurative language those sentences/phrases were.</td>
<td>3 Not Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Josue.**

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Josue was unsuccessful with the assignment since he only identified six of the 14 instances of figurative language in the song.

Although he was able to identify “Cause baby you’re a firework” as a metaphor, he incorrectly identifies “What the future holds” as a paradox instead of personification. When asked to define the figurative language from the assignment, Josue responded, “I get confused which is which. I know simile is comparing two things but the rest I can’t remember very well so I just guess.”

**Alejandro.**

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Alejandro was unsuccessful with this assignment. Of the fourteen parts of the song that had figurative language that students were asked to identify, Alejandro identified 8 correctly. For example, one phrase from the song reads, “Do you ever feel like a plastic bag?”
Alejandro correctly identified this as a simile. Six of his answers were incorrect. In another part of the song, “As you shoot across the sky” Alejandro wrote that the phrase was a simile instead of a hyperbole. When asked to explain in his own words what he understood about figurative language, he said, “I got confused and I thought they were all *similes* and I couldn’t figure out the other ones.” Therefore, he did not directly answer the question so it was not clear what he understood about figurative language.

**Roman.**

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Roman was not successful with the assignment. He answered two of the 14 questions. He did not identify figurative language in his answers. For example, instead of identifying the phrase from the song, “*Do you ever feel like a plastic bag?*” as a simile, he wrote, “You feel bad.” When asked about *onomatopoeia* in his interview, he answered, “It is sounds.”

**Figurative language paragraph.**

In an extension assignment, students were asked to write their own paragraph. They worked on the paragraph independently. In their paragraph they needed to include one example of personification, one example of a simile, one example of hyperbole, and one example of onomatopoeia. For this assignment, the academic vocabulary was *personification, simile, hyperbole, and onomatopoeia*. Table 28 below shows how the paragraph was evaluated.
Table 28

*Figurative Language Paragraph Rubric*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correctly includes 75% of the figurative language in the paragraph. Correctly defines 75% of the figurative language when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Correctly includes at least 50% of the figurative language in the paragraph. Correctly defines at least 50% of the figurative language when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Correctly includes less than 50% of the figurative language in the paragraph. Correctly defines less than 50% of the figurative language when answering interview questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.

Table 29

*Students’ Understanding of Figurative Language*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figurative Language Paragraph</td>
<td>Students wrote a paragraph that included personification, simile, hyperbole, and onomatopoeia</td>
<td><em>personification, simile, hyperbole onomatopoeia</em></td>
<td>Independent work</td>
<td>Write their own paragraph that included personification, simile, hyperbole and onomatopoeia appropriately.</td>
<td>2 Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Alejandro.*

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Alejandro was successful with the assignment since he included all of the required figurative language.

For example, he wrote the simile, “*I felt guilty like O.J.*” and the hyperbole “*Giant red ants*...
started chasing me around.” When asked to define figurative language, Alejandro said, “I know all of them like a simile is comparing two things and a hyperbole is an exaggeration.”

Roman.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Roman was successful with the assignment. For example, he included personification, “The wolf said to the teacher…” When asked about figurative language in the interview, Roman said, “, I know about similes and personification a little bit but sometimes I forget what they are called. I know simile is when you use like or as. I know metaphor you don’t.”

Idiom review.

One assignment was a review focused in idioms. Students were given a short multiple-choice quiz of nine questions. Each question had an idiom and then there were several options of what the idiom means when it is said as an expression. Students were asked to match the idiom with the correct meaning. For this assignment, the academic vocabulary was idiom. Table 30 shows how the students were evaluated on this assignment.

Table 30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idiom Review Rubric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Successful</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chooses the correct answer choice at least 77% of the time. Correctly defines idiom when answering interview questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 31 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.

Table 31

*Students’ Understanding of Idioms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idiom Review</td>
<td>Teacher read common idioms and showed answer options.</td>
<td>Idiom</td>
<td>Individual Work</td>
<td>Identify the meanings of common idioms.</td>
<td>1 Successful 1 Partially Successful 1 Not Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Roman.*

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Roman was unsuccessful with the assignment. He was only able to answer five of the questions correctly. When asked about idioms in his interview, Roman said, “Idioms are expressions you say but you don’t mean what you say literally.”

*Silvia.*

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Silvia was successful with the assignment since she answered one hundred percent of the questions correctly. When asked to define idiom in the interview, Silvia said, “They are expressions like *I feel blue* or *My ears are burning*. I learned a lot in Spanish when I was little so now I am learning the English ones.”
According to the assignment used to evaluate this assignment, David was partially successful with the assignment since he missed three questions. When asked in his interview to define *idiom*, David responded, “*Idioms* are when you say something that doesn’t mean what you are really saying, it means something else. Like an expression.”

**Tone.**

The teacher wanted students to review tone and learn how to identify the tone of passages they read. She assigned students to read four paragraphs and then using a list of tone words, assign a tone to each paragraph. Next, they were asked to pull out words and phrases from the paragraphs that supported the tone word they had chosen. Students worked with partners on this activity. For this assignment, the academic vocabulary or concept was tone. Table 32 shows how students were evaluated on this assignment.

Table 32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correctly identifies the tone and chooses appropriate words and phrases for at least 75% of the paragraphs. Correctly defines <em>tone</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Correctly identifies the tone and chooses appropriate words and phrases for at least 50% of the paragraphs. Correctly defines <em>tone</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Correctly identifies the tone and chooses appropriate words and phrases for less than 50% of the paragraphs. Does not define <em>tone</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 33 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.
Table 33

*Students’ Understanding of Tone*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifying Tone</td>
<td>Students read paragraphs and then decided on tone words to describe the paragraphs. They also pulled out words or phrases that best represented that tone.</td>
<td>tone</td>
<td>Partner work</td>
<td>Identify the tones of several paragraphs. They also identified words and or phrases from the paragraphs that contributed to the tone they had chosen.</td>
<td>1 Partially Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Alejandro.**

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Alejandro was partially successful with the assignment since he only completed 50% of the assignment. The parts he did complete were correct. For example, he assigned the word “bitter” to one paragraph and then pulled out the phrases, “once more I release my rugged cry”, “I scarcely notice the pain”, and “I scream my pain out from my gut.” The phrases he had chosen showed that bitter was a good answer.

When asked in the interview to define tone, Alejandro answered, “Tone is the feeling or mood of something.”
Abdiel.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Abdiel was unsuccessful with the assignment. He wrote a tone word for each paragraph but only pulled out words and phrases to support the tone in one. When asked to define tone in his own words, Abdiel said, “It’s the feeling that a story can give you.”

Short stories

In two assignments, students reviewed academic vocabulary and concepts through short stories. They reviewed story elements, figurative language, and other important academic vocabulary and concepts. In the assignments for this study, students read two short stories and two newspaper articles. Six artifacts were collected from these assignments. Overall, students were successful three times, partly successful one time and unsuccessful two times.

Students read two short stories. As the teacher read to the students, she paused throughout to discuss characters, events and conflicts. After reading the story, students worked with partners to answer six questions. For each question, they had to provide an answer in their own words and then, textual evidence from the story to prove that their answer was correct. For this assignment, the academic vocabulary and concepts were evidence, event, main character, and conflict. Table 34 shows how the students were evaluated on this assignment.
Table 34

“Un Faite” Story Elements Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correctly answers and provides evidence for at least 83% of the questions. Defines at least 75% of the academic vocabulary and concepts when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Correctly answers and provides evidence for at least 66% of the questions. Defines at least 60 % of the academic vocabulary and concepts when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Correctly answers and provides evidence for less than 66% of the questions. Defines less than 60% of the academic vocabulary and concepts when answering interview questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 35 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.

Table 35

Students’ Understanding of Evidence, Event, Main Character, Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Un Faite (book chapter)</td>
<td>As the teacher reads the chapter aloud, students discuss events, characters, etc.</td>
<td>Evidence, event, main character, conflict</td>
<td>Teacher read-aloud, guided discussion, partner work</td>
<td>Find appropriate evidence from the text to answer the questions.</td>
<td>2 Successful 1 Partially Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alejandro.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Alejandro was successful with this assignment. He answered all of the questions correctly and provided appropriate textual evidence.

For example, one question asked, “Why was Kiko nervous?” Alejandro answered in his own words, “Kiko was nervous because a group of guys were behind him and he didn’t want to get in a fight.” The textual evidence he provided was appropriate, “Kiko had noticed a group of mochos following them.” This showed that he understood how to support his answer using textual evidence. When asked to explain in his own words what textual evidence is, Alejandro stated, “It is the part of the story that you copy down to prove what you are saying is true.”

Roman.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Roman was successful with the assignment. He answered the questions correctly and provided appropriate evidence. For example, for the question, “Why does Kiko feel better?” He correctly answers, “Kiko feels better cause he knows his friend will back him up.” The evidence he provides from the story is appropriate, “Kiko knew he would be ok because behind the mochos, leaning up against the wall of the gym, were Trompo, Ramon, and the other vatos who would stand by him through anything.”

When asked about the academic vocabulary and concepts from the assignment, Roman answered, “Evidence is when you use parts of a story to prove the point of what you are saying.”
Abdiel.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Abdiel was partially successful in the assignment. Although he chose appropriate evidence from the text, the answers he wrote in his own words were not written clearly. For example in response to the question, “Why did Kiko get involved in the fight?” He wrote, “Got involved in the fight because were getting beat up.” He does not explain who is getting beat up.

When asked to define the academic vocabulary from this assignment, Abdiel answered, “The textual evidence are the sentences or words from the story that prove what you are trying to say in your answer.”

“The Whistle”.

After reading another short story, students were asked to work in groups in order to complete four tasks. They were required to list events from the story in chronological order, draw an image to represent the story, pick a favorite quote, define and write the synonym and antonym of two words that were new to them. For this assignment, the academic vocabulary and concepts were quote, define, synonym, antonym, image, and chronological. Table 36 shows how students were evaluated on this assignment.
Table 36

“The Whistle” Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completes at least 75% of the tasks correctly. Correctly defines at least 75% of the academic vocabulary such as chronological, image, evidence, define, synonym, and antonym when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Completes at least 50% of the tasks correctly. Correctly defines at least 50% of the academic vocabulary such as chronological, image, evidence, define, synonym, and antonym when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Completes less than 50% of the tasks correctly. Correctly defines at least less than 50% of the academic vocabulary such as chronological, image, evidence, define, synonym, and antonym when answering interview questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 37 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.

Table 37

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Whistle</td>
<td>Students work together to answer questions about the story</td>
<td>Chronological, image, quote, define, synonym, antonym</td>
<td>Read-aloud, group discussion, group work</td>
<td>Answer questions that include academic vocabulary about the story.</td>
<td>3 Not Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alejandro.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Alejandro was unsuccessful with this assignment. He only completed one part of one of the sections. For the part of the question in which he was asked to define a new word, he found a new
word and defined it, “Discerned: perceive clearly with the mind or the senses.” He did not include the antonym or synonym. He also did not do any other part of the assignment.

When asked to define the academic vocabulary and concepts from the assignment, he answered, “I know chronological is about order, image is a picture, it could be real or one in your mind. Define is to give a definition, synonym is the same and antonym is different.” Therefore, Alejandro understood the academic vocabulary and concepts but did not complete enough of the assignment to be successful with it.

Josue.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Josue was not successful with the assignment since he only completed one part of one section. He defined a word, “Discerned: perceive clearly with the mind or the senses.” He did not include the antonym or synonym. He also did not do any other part of the assignment. When asked to define the academic vocabulary and concepts from the assignment, Josue stated, “I think chronological is like in order from first to last. An image is like a picture or drawing. A quote is a sentence in the story. Antonym and synonym-one is the same and one is different. I think the antonym is the different one.”

David.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, David was not successful with the assignment since he only completed one part of it. He drew an image from the story and write a description of it, “I chose this picture because this was one of the main events. That happened in out pages that we read. The coffee was one of the main things too.”
When asked to define the academic concepts and vocabulary from this assignment, David said, “I don’t know what chronological is. Image is like what you see, definition is like what they have in the dictionary. Antonym and synonym I don’t remember.”

**Novel**

Ten artifacts collected during the course of this study were related to a novel the students reading. Assignments based on the novel focused on academic vocabulary and concepts such as figurative language, story elements, tone, textual evidence, and talking, seeing, action, and thinking. Many of the novel assignments were tests and quizzes on reading that students were asked to do for homework. Overall, students were successful with these assignments four times, partly successful four times, and unsuccessful two times.

**Novel test.**

All of the artifacts based on the novel were tests and quizzes. The first test students took was on the first several chapters of the book. The test included multiple choice questions that included figurative language, tone, and story elements. There were three short answer questions-one of these questions also focused on tone. From there, students were asked to write an essay that was on a topic related to what they had read about in the novel, “Write about a time something unexpected happened.” The essay had to include talking, action, thinking, and seeing. For this assignment, the academic vocabulary and concepts were simile, primary, tone, talking, thinking, action, and seeing. Table 38 shows how the students were evaluated for this assignment.
Table 38

*Novel Test Rubric*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correctly answers at least 77% of the questions. Is successful on the essay as described in Table 10. Correctly defines at least 75% of the academic vocabulary and concepts when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Correctly answers at least 66% of the questions. Is partially successful on the essay as described in Table 10. Correctly defines at least 50% of the academic concepts and vocabulary when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Correctly answers less than 66% of the questions. Is unsuccessful on the essay as described in Table 10. Correctly defines less than 50% of the academic concepts and vocabulary when answering interview questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 39 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.
Table 39

**Students’ Understanding of Figurative Language**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novel Test</td>
<td>Students took a test after reading a few chapters from <em>The Hunger Games</em></td>
<td><em>Simile, primary, tone</em>-other figurative language</td>
<td>Individual work</td>
<td>Answer multiple choice questions, open ended questions, and a personal narrative essay that the students were required to write. Many of the questions included academic vocabulary.</td>
<td>1 Successful 2 Not Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*David.*

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, David was partly successful with the assignment. He answered the multiple-choice questions correctly but did not answer any of the open-ended questions. He was successful on the essay. When asked to define the academic concepts and vocabulary from the test, David answered, “I understand all of the figurative language but I didn’t do well because I did not read the chapter. *Simile* is to compare two things. *Primary* is the first or most important. The essay was easy because I understood the topic and I had some ideas of what to write because a lot of unexpected things happen to me.”
Roman.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Roman was unsuccessful on the test. He answered 3 of the 6 multiple-choice questions correctly and did not complete the rest of the test. When asked to describe the academic vocabulary and concepts from this assignment, he said, I got confused. I couldn’t remember what the different figurative language stuff was.”

Abdiel.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Abdiel was not successful on the test. He answered three multiple choice questions correctly, did not answer any open-ended questions, and only wrote one paragraph of the essay. When asked to define the academic concepts and vocabulary from the assignment, Abdiel said, “I understand all those words like simile and tone but I didn’t really concentrate when I was reading the chapters so I forgot some stuff and I didn’t answer all the questions right.”

Chapter 2 quiz.

Another assignment from the novel was a short quiz on the second chapter from the novel. Students were given four quotes from the story and then asked to describe how the quotes related to events from the chapter. Students were also asked to describe their favorite part of the chapter and then describe several characters. For this assignment, the academic vocabulary and concepts were quote and character. Table 40 shows how the students were evaluated for this assignment.
Table 40

Chapter 2 Quiz Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correctly answers at least 83% of the questions. Correctly defines <em>quote</em> and character when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Correctly answers at least 66% of the questions. Correctly defines <em>quote</em> and or <em>character</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Correctly answers less than 66% of the questions. Does not correctly define <em>quote</em> and <em>character</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 41 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.

Table 41

Students’ Understanding of Quote and Character

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Organizational structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Hunger Games Chapter 2 Test</td>
<td>Students took a quiz after reading independently</td>
<td><em>Quote</em> Character</td>
<td>Independent Work</td>
<td>Answer questions about the chapter using textual evidence from the story.</td>
<td>1 Successful 1 Partly Successful 2 Not Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Alejandro.*

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, he was successful with the assignment. He responded correctly to all of the quotes. On one question, he was provided the quote, “Oh, no, I think. Not him. Because I recognize the name, although I
have never spoken directly to its owner.” Alejandro explained “Katniss remembers the little boy. She remembers that thanks to him her family got to eat some pieces of bread.” This answer relates directly to the quote and the context of the story.

Alejandro answered the question about character correctly. He was asked to describe several characters from the story. He describes one character named Gale, “Guy that is a very good friend to Katniss. He is very helpful to other people.”

When asked after this assignment to explain textual evidence and character in his own words, Alejandro answered, “I know that a quote is when you use evidence from a story.” He did not explain what he understood about character, therefore he may or may not understand the concept of character.

Josue.

For this assignment, it is inconclusive whether Josue was successful or not since he had the same answers as another student. In his second interview question about how working by himself on the assignment helped or did not help him with the academic vocabulary and concepts, Josue responded, “I didn’t read the chapter so I copied the answers.” When asked to define the academic vocabulary and concepts from the assignment, he answered, “A quote is when someone says something-like a famous saying. Characters are the ones that come out in the story, the people.

Abdiel.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, he was unsuccessful with the assignment. He did not respond appropriately to any of the quotes and he answered the two questions incorrectly.
For example, when responding to the quote, “Oh, no, I think. Not him. Because I recognize the name, although I have never spoken directly to its owner.” Abdiel wrote, “That the girl rich is now very poor because of things she did wrong.” This does not relate to the story in any way. When asked about the academic concepts and vocabulary in this assignment, he responded, “Quote is taking words from the story. Characters are the ones that come out in the story like the good guy and the bad guy.”

**Silvia.**

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Silvia was partially successful. She does not answer all of the questions and does not write complete answers in response to all of the quotes. On the character question, she describes three of the five characters. When asked to describe *quote* and *character* in the interview, Silvia answered, “Quotes are sentences from a story or article. The characters are the people in the story. Or in some stories they are animals.”

**Chapter 9 quiz.**

The next quiz students had on the novel was based on chapter nine. The quiz was similar to the Chapter 2 Quiz. Students were provided three quotes from the story and were asked to explain how the quotes related to events from the chapter. For this assignment, the academic concept was quote. Table 42 shows how the students were evaluated for this assignment.
Table 42

*Chapter 9 Quiz Rubric*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correctly answers at least 66% of the questions. Correctly defines <em>quote</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Correctly answers at least 33% of the questions. Correctly defines <em>quote</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Correctly answers less than 33% of the questions. Does not correctly define <em>quote</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 43 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.

Table 43

*Students' Understanding of Quote*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Organizational structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Hunger Games Chapter 9 Quiz</td>
<td>Students took a quiz after reading a chapter independently</td>
<td><em>Quote</em></td>
<td>Individual Work</td>
<td>Write a correct explanation of what was happening in those parts of the chapter.</td>
<td>3 Successful 1 Not Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Josue.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Josue was successful with the assignment. He responded appropriately to all of the quotes. In response to the quote, “Handsome lad like you. There must be some special girl. Come on, what’s her name?” he wrote, “They are asking Peeta if he have a girlfriend in District 12.” When
asked to describe quote in his interview question, Josue responded, “I understand that with quotes, you find a part in the story that relates to what you are putting in your answer.”

*Alejandro.*

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, he was successful with the assignment since he responded appropriately to all of the quotes. For example, when responding to the quote, “Handsome lad like you. There must be some special girl. Come on, what’s her name?” Alejandro responds, “Peeta is a handsome guy so he must have someone who likes him in district 12.” This is an appropriate response to the quote.

*Silvia.*

For this assignment, according to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Silvia was successful. She responded appropriately to all the quotes. For example, when responding to “Right before we parade on stage, Haymitch comes up behind Peeta and me and growls, ‘Remember you are still a happy pair. So act like it.’” Silvia wrote, “Peeta and Katniss are getting ready to get on stage for their interviews and Haymitch reminds them to still act like if they are best friends.”

When asked to define quote in her interview question, Silvia answers, “*Quotes* are parts of the story we use to prove what we say in the answer.”

*Abdiel.*

For this assignment, according to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Abdiel was unsuccessful with the assignment. He did not respond appropriately to any of the quotes. For example, when explaining the quote, “We try me playing cocky, but I
don’t have the arrogance…” he writes, “Trying to tell that if they are going to say something say it clearly.” This does not relate in any way to the quote or the story.

**Chapter 10 quiz.**

Students also had a quiz based on chapter 10 of the novel. The assignment was to draw six pictures from the chapter. The pictures needed to be in chronological order. Under each drawing, students were asked to draw a description. For this assignment, the academic vocabulary or concept was *chronological*. Table 44 shows how the students were evaluated for this assignment.

**Table 44**

*Chapter 10 Quiz Rubric*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Places at least 66% of the drawings in correct chronological order and write descriptions of each drawing. Correctly defines <em>chronological</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Places at least 50% of the drawings in correct chronological order and write descriptions of each drawing. Correctly defines <em>chronological</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Places at less than% of the drawings in correct chronological order and does not write descriptions of each drawing. Does not correctly define <em>chronological</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 45 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.
Table 45

*Students’ Understanding of Scenes and Chronological Order*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Organizational structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Hunger Games Chapter 10</td>
<td>Students drew a scene from the chapter in chronological order</td>
<td><em>Scenes, chronological order</em></td>
<td>Individual Work</td>
<td>Pick a scene they remembered from the chapter and draw it in chronological order.</td>
<td>1 Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Alejandro.**

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Alejandro was successful with the assignment. He drew four of the six pictures. They were in chronological order.

For example, his first drawing is of one of the characters being interviewed. The caption under the drawing reads, “Caesar and Peeta talk about Peeta liking Katniss.” In the next box, there is a drawing of one character pushing another. The caption reads, “Katniss pushes Peeta and hurts his hand.” This is correct since this is the order that the events happened in the novel. When asked to describe scenes and chronological order in his interview, Alejandro said, “*Scenes* are the parts of the story. Like every time they go to a different place or it is a new time, that would be a new scene. *Chronological* is the order like first morning, then afternoon, then night.”
Novel summary and quotes.

After finishing the novel, students were put into groups and each group was assigned several pages from the book. In their groups, they were asked to write a summary of events for their section as well as give one example each of talking, action, thinking, and seeing. For this assignment, the academic vocabulary and concepts were summary, talking, thinking, seeing, and action. Table 46 shows how students were evaluated on this assignment.

Table 46

Novel Summary Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writes a complete summary of the section and identifies at least 50% of the talking, seeing, action, and thinking. Successfully describes at least 50% of the academic vocabulary and concepts when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Writes a summary for at least half of the section and identifies at least 25% of the talking, action, thinking, seeing. Successfully describes at least 25% of the academic vocabulary and concepts when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Writes a summary for less than half of the section and does not identify talking, action, thinking, and seeing. Successfully describes less than 25% of the academic vocabulary and concepts when answering interview questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 47 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.
### Table 47

*Students’ Understanding of Summary, Talking, Thinking, Action, Seeing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Organizational structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novel Summary and Quotes</td>
<td>Write a summary and identify <em>talking, action, thinking</em>, and <em>seeing</em> examples from the chapter</td>
<td><em>Summary, talking, action, thinking, seeing</em></td>
<td>Guided discussion, group work</td>
<td>Write a short summary of one chapter and then put out examples of <em>thinking, action, talking</em>, and <em>seeing</em> from the same chapter.</td>
<td>2 successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Silvia.**

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Silvia was successful with the assignment. She completed all parts of it correctly. For example, for example of seeing she found the quote, “for a while, we held each other’s gaze.” When asked to describe the academic vocabulary and concepts from this assignment, she responded, “Summary is the main ideas of what you read or talk about or whatever. *Talking* is what people say, action is what they do, *thinking* is what thoughts they have, and *seeing* is what they see or can picture if the author is describing something like a place or how a person looks.”

**Roman.**

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Roman was successful with the assignment. He gave a complete summary and gave correct examples of *talking,*
thinking, seeing, and action. For example, for thinking he picks the quote from The Hunger Games, “This is an ok place to die, I think.”

When asked to define the academic concepts and vocabulary from this section, Roman answers, “Summary is like the main points of what you read. Talking, thinking, action, and seeing are the different parts of a story or essay. Like, talking is what they say, thinking is what they think about something that happens, seeing is what they are looking at, and action is what moves they make.”

Projects

Three assignments included in this study were projects. Through working on these projects, students reviewed academic vocabulary and concepts such as figurative language and story elements. Five artifacts were collected that reflected these projects. Overall, the students were successful four times and partly successful on one assignment.

Idiom project.

In order to review idioms, students first went over a list of idioms and discussed the meaning of the idioms as a class. After the discussion, students worked independently to pick one idiom and make a drawing that shows the literal meaning. Under the drawing they were asked to explain what the idiom means when it is said as an expression. For this assignment, the academic vocabulary was idiom. Table 48 shows how the students were evaluated for this assignment.
Table 48

_Idiom Project Rubric_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing represents literal meaning. Writes a correct description of the expression. Correctly defines <em>idiom</em> when asked interview questions.</td>
<td>Drawing partly represents literal meaning. Description of the expression partly correct. Correctly defines <em>idiom</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Drawing does not represent the literal meaning and/or the written description of the expression is incorrect. Does not correctly define <em>idiom</em> when answering interview questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 49 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.

Table 49

_Students’ Understanding of Idioms_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idiom Project</th>
<th>Students were asked to pick one idiom, draw the literal meaning and then explain its meaning</th>
<th>Idiom</th>
<th>Guided discussion, individual work</th>
<th>Create a visual that showed the literal meaning of an idiom and then explain what the idiom means</th>
<th>1 Successful 1 Partially Successful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

_Abdiel_.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Abdiel was partly successful with the assignment. He drew the literal picture of a tough cookie but he did not write what the idiom means when it is said as an expression. When asked about
idioms in the interview, Abdiel stated, “Idiom is like when you say *I feel blue* or *My ears are burning*. Like you say something to represent something else.”

*Alejandro.*

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Alejandro was successful with this assignment. He chose the idiom, “*Elvis has left the building*”. He drew a crowd of people outside of a building cheering for Elvis and a car (we assume that Elvis is in the car) leaving. For his explanation of the idiom, Alejandro wrote, “The show has come to an end.”

When asked to explain in his own words what an idiom is, Armando explained, “An idiom is when you say something you don’t mean exactly but it’s like an expression.”

*Movie poster.*

In another assignment, the teacher led the students in a discussion about story elements. She asked students to name famous movies and then tell about the various story elements such as *character, setting, and conflict*. Then, students were asked to work in groups and make a movie poster. On the poster they were required to describe the story elements of the movie. For this assignment, the academic vocabulary and concepts included *protagonist, antagonist, conflict, setting,* and *summary*. Table 50 describes how the students were evaluated for this assignment.
Table 50

*Story Elements Movie Poster Rubric*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partly Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students correctly include at least 60% of the story elements on their movie poster. Correctly define at least 60% of the story elements when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Students correctly include at least 20% of the story elements on their movie poster. Correctly define at least 20% of the story elements when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Students correctly include less than 20% of the story elements on their movie poster. Correctly define less than 20% of the story elements when answering interview questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 51 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.

Table 51

*Students' Understanding of Story Elements*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Organizational structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Movie Poster</td>
<td>Students chose their favorite movie and wrote about the movies elements such as protagonist and antagonist.</td>
<td>Protagonist, antagonist, conflict, setting, summary</td>
<td>Class review, group work</td>
<td>Identify the protagonist, antagonist, setting, conflict and character from their favorite movie.</td>
<td>1 Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Alejandro.**

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, he was successful with the assignment since he included all of the required story elements on his poster. For example, on his movie poster on the movie *Spider Man*, he named “Peter
Parker/Spiderman” as the protagonist and “Venom, Sandman, Green Goblin” as antagonists. When asked to describe the academic concepts and vocabulary from the assignment, Alejandro answered, “These are easy for me already. Protagonist is the one that I relate to the most, usually the main character. Antagonist is the opposite, it is whoever or whatever is against the protagonist. Conflict is the problem, setting is the places and summary is the beginning, middle, and end of the story.”

Character newspaper.

On a similar assignment, students worked in groups to create a newspaper based on a character from a graphic novel they had read. They were asked to describe the character and then, list several adjectives to describe the character using a list of words they had been provided. This list of words to describe people included ambitious, cautious, and conscientious. They picked their favorite quote from the book that related to the character, write it and explained why they liked it. They were also asked to identify parts in the book that relate to the character that include talking, action, thinking, seeing. For this assignment, the academic vocabulary and concepts included character, quotes, summary, talking, thinking, action, thinking, and words to describe people. Table 52 shows how students were evaluated on this assignment.

Table 52

Character Newspaper Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially Successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completes at least 75% of the newspaper. Defines at least 80% of the academic vocabulary and concepts when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Completes at least 50% of the newspaper. Defines at least 70% of the academic concepts and vocabulary when answering interview questions.</td>
<td>Completes less than 50% of the newspaper. Defines at less than 70% of the academic concepts and vocabulary when answering interview questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 53 describes the assignment, which academic concepts and vocabulary were the focus of the assignment, and how many students were successful with the assignment.

Table 53

*Students’ Understanding of Story Elements*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary Taught</th>
<th>Organizational structure(s) Used</th>
<th>Method of evaluating student response</th>
<th>Results of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character Newspaper</td>
<td>Students worked in groups to write about their favorite character.</td>
<td>Character, Words to describe people, quotes, summary</td>
<td>Group activity</td>
<td>Create a newsletter based on their favorite character.</td>
<td>3 Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Alejandro.**

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Alejandro was successful with the assignment since he completed all of it.

For example, in the section where he was asked to use adjectives to describe his character, Alejandro wrote, “*Ambitious, Cautious, Conscientious, Perfectionist, Shy.*” All of these words correctly describe the character the newspaper is based on. When asked to explain the academic vocabulary and concepts from the assignment, Alejandro responded, “*Characters are the ones that come out in the story-the people or whoever. In some stories they are animals. There are a lot of words to describe people like nice, friendly, and greedy. Quotes are sentences or parts of a story that you take out to prove something. Summary is main ideas or beginning, middle, and end.*”
David.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, David was successful with the assignment since he completed it all. For example, for his favorite quote, he chose, “I demand to be let into this dinner party” and he explained, “This was our favorite quote because the Monkey King is getting mad because he wants to go into the party and they don’t let him.”

When asked to define the academic vocabulary and concepts from the assignment, David said, “The people in the essay are the characters. The quotes are the sentences from the story to prove what you say. Summary is beginning, middle, and end of the essay or whatever you read.”

Roman.

According to the rubric used to evaluate this assignment, Roman was successful with the project. He completed all the sections. For example, the list of words he used to describe the character, “Aggressive, clever, powerful, serious, happy.” These words describe the character well.

When asked to describe the academic vocabulary and concepts from the assignment, Roman said, Characters are people in a story. Quotes are part of a story we use to support evidence for the open-ended answers. Summary is the main idea or ideas.”

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the ways that teaching academic concepts and vocabulary in language arts to secondary long-term English learners impacts their academic success. Six students participated in this research project. They participated in 23 different assignments. These included assignments based on essay
writing, assignments that reviewed academic vocabulary and concepts that students had been learning, assignments based on short stories, assignments based on a novel, and literacy projects. These assignments provided the data used to answer the primary question, “In what ways does teaching academic concepts and vocabulary in language arts to secondary long-term English learners impact their academic success?”

In order to answer the sub-question, “What specific pedagogical structures for teaching academic concepts and vocabulary are used?” I observed each class session and then created a chart that shows the different pedagogical structures that were used for each assignment.

In order to answer the sub-question, “What are the students’ perceptions of the organizational approaches that are used?” I recorded the answers to the interview question, “In today’s assignment, you (here I inserted the pedagogical structure or pedagogical structures that were used for the assignment). How did this help you or not help you to understand (Here I inserted the academic vocabulary or concept that was the focus of the assignment)?”

All assignments focused on important academic vocabulary and concepts of language arts. In order to answer the sub-question, “How did the students’ work reflect their understanding of the academic concepts and vocabulary that were taught?” I used rubrics to evaluate student work for each assignment. Based on the rubrics and interview answers, students were determined to be either successful, partially successful, or unsuccessful with the different assignments.

In addition, for this sub-question, in order to evaluate whether students were able to explain the academic vocabulary and concepts that were the focus of the assignments
in their own words, I interviewed each student after each assignment and asked, “In today’s assignment, you reviewed (here I inserted the academic vocabulary or concepts they reviewed). In your own words, explain what you understand about these topics.” Answers to this question were recorded.

In chapter five, I will begin by summarizing the findings that were presented in this chapter. I will review the findings related to the students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures they participated in and their understanding of the academic vocabulary and concepts. From there, I will draw conclusions based on the findings. The conclusions will also be about students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures and students’ understanding of the academic vocabulary and concepts. I will conclude by describing what further could be studied in the area of this research.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This study is focused on English language learners (ELLs) who have been in the United States seven years or longer and who are categorized as long-term English learners (LTELLs) (Corson, 1997, Freeman & Freeman, 2009, Meltzer & Hamann, 2005, Olsen, 2010). The problem of the study centers on the fact that many (LTELLs) are not experiencing academic success in U.S. schools (Corson, 1997; Freeman & Freeman, 2009; Meltzer & Hamann, 2005). The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of different pedagogical structures on the teaching of academic concepts and vocabulary to LTELLs.

This chapter, which reports on the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the data, begins with a brief overview of the entire study. The problem will be reviewed, the research questions stated, and some of the major research that supports the study will be summarized. Then, a review of all the findings from the analysis of the data will be given. Next, conclusions based on the research questions will be presented. This will be followed by a discussion of the implications of the study, suggestions for future research, and a summary of the chapter.

Summary of the Study

Overview

In the United States, a large number of Latinos are English language learners (ELLs) who historically struggle academically (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). In the last few years, there has been a focus on improving the academic achievement of Latino ELLs in elementary schools, but an alarming number of these students are now entering and failing in secondary schools. The largest group of these secondary ELLs are long-
term English learners (LTELLs) (Menken et al., 2010) who have been in the U.S. for seven or more years. These students need support, but there exists very little research about them.

ELLs struggle with the academic language of school (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). Corson (1997) explains that the specific academic language of school subjects is especially challenging to English language learners since it is usually used in culturally determined ways that are specific to a particular meaning system. He argues that this is why it is difficult for adolescent ELLs to develop and use academic language in ways that native English speakers do.

For this study, I looked at the effects of using different pedagogical structures in teaching LTELLs the specialized academic vocabulary and concepts of language arts. The pedagogical structures included in the study were teacher modeling, guided discussion, group work, partner work, and independent work. Specifically, I wanted to see if using these pedagogical structures while teaching the vocabulary and concepts related to English language arts would increase their achievement levels in their assignments for the English language arts class.

In this observational qualitative study I examined the academic vocabulary and concept development of six long-term English learners. I investigated one main question and three sub-questions:

Question: In what ways does teaching academic concepts and vocabulary in language arts to secondary long-term English learners impact their academic success on their assignments in their English language arts class. My sub-questions were:
(7) What specific pedagogical structures for teaching academic concepts and vocabulary were used?

(8) What were the students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures that were used?

(9) How did the students’ work reflect their understanding of the academic concepts and the academic vocabulary that were taught?

Data Collection

To gather data needed to answer the three sub-questions, I used a variety of methods. In order to address the sub-question, “What specific pedagogical structures for teaching academic concepts and vocabulary were used?” I worked with the cooperating teacher to design twenty-one lesson plans with twenty-one different assignments that would engage students in activities that would enable them to learn and review academic vocabulary and concepts. The lessons had a variety of different pedagogical structures such as teacher modeling, guided discussion, group work, partner work, and independent work. In my Researcher’s Journal I was able to record which pedagogical structures were used, and what, if any, changes were made to the assignments when they were presented.

After each of the twenty-one assignments, I conducted interviews with the six participants. In order to address the second sub-question, “What were the students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures for teaching academic concepts and vocabulary were used?” Students were asked about their perceptions of the pedagogical structures.

In order to answer the third sub-question, “How did the students’ work reflect their understanding of the academic concepts and vocabulary that were taught?” I collected student work that included academic concepts and vocabulary. To facilitate the analysis of the data, I created a document review chart in order to have a record of each of the
twenty one assignments and how student work reflected or did not reflect understanding of the academic concepts and vocabulary that were taught. I also used information from the interviews to determine whether or not the students understood the concepts and vocabulary even when they may have had difficulty completing a written assignment to demonstrate their understanding.

Participants and Setting

The study was conducted in a secondary regular English language arts classroom in a large South Texas high school. Seven percent of the students at the school are identified as English learners. The teacher of the course is a colleague who regularly plans with the researcher and other English teachers.

The participants for this investigation were high school sophomores enrolled in an English language arts class taught by the teacher colleague. Six students were selected to participate in the study. The students were chosen based on the results of a survey which showed that these six students had the characteristics of LTELLs.

Background

The term English language learner (ELL) refers to students whose first language is not English. This definition encompasses both students who are just beginning to learn English as well as those who have already developed English language proficiency (LaCelle-Peterson & Rivera, 1994). Freeman and Freeman (2002) explain that the different types of ELLs in secondary schools are not often recognized. Educators tend to put all ELLs into one category. Programs that are designed to help these students are based on the assumption that all ELLs are alike. Freeman and Freeman argue that there
are three groups of ELLs in U.S. schools, the newly arrived with adequate formal schooling, the newly arrived with limited formal schooling, and the long-term ELLs.

One of the characteristics of long-term ELLs is that they are not academically successful (Olsen, 2010). It is important to examine why language minority students overall have not been succeeding in schools. Thomas and Collier (1997) found three key predictors of academic success that included cognitively complex on grade level academic instruction through students’ first language as long as possible, the use of current approaches to teaching the academic curriculum through two languages, and a transformed sociocultural context for ELL schooling. Students who become LTELLs generally come from programs that lack these predictors.

ELLs have specific characteristics that require educators to understand who they are and what they need. Freeman & Freeman (2009), Menken et al. (2009) and Olsen (2010). Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) argue that one reason that students are performing at such low levels is that they are not “explicitly taught sophisticated genres, specialized language conventions, disciplinary norms of conventions, disciplinary norms of precision and accuracy, and higher-level interpretive processes” (p.43).

In most cases, English language learners are exposed to conversational language to a much greater extent than academic language. Therefore, these students tend to develop conversational fluency before they develop academic language proficiency (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). Although all students need to be exposed to academic language, there are certain types of learners that especially benefit from being explicitly taught this specialized vocabulary. These include LTELLs. As with other academic subjects, language arts has its own content specific vocabulary. When teaching students
the academic vocabulary specific to language arts, Freeman and Freeman (2009) recommend that it be done through the context of reading and writing.

In the following section, I will present a summary of the findings from Chapter 4. In this summary, I will focus my conclusions around my three research questions, “What pedagogical structures were used”, “What were the students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures?” and “How did the students’ work reflect their understanding of the academic concepts and the academic vocabulary that were taught?”

**Findings**

**Pedagogical Structures**

To answer the first research sub-question: “What pedagogical structures were used?” the different pedagogical structures used in this study were described. These pedagogical structures included teacher modeling, guided discussions, group work, partner work, and independent work.

For teacher modeling, the participating teacher worked with the entire class to model the assignment that she wanted them to complete. In the guided discussion, the participating teacher and the students engaged in discussions related to topics they were studying. For group work, students were either put into groups or the participating teacher assigned groups that students worked in to complete assignments. Partner work was also either teacher assigned or student’s choice. Several of the assignments for this study involved independent work where students worked on their own to complete their assignments. Since the cooperating teacher followed a gradual release of responsibility model, most assignments included more than one pedagogical structure.

In answering the second research sub-question related to the pedagogical
structures, students were asked about their perceptions on all of the structures that were used. It should be noted that, in their answers, students sometimes commented on all of the structures. Other times, they only commented on some but not all.

It is also important to explain that although six students participated in the study, not all students participated in all of the assignments. In some cases, students were absent. Other times, they simply did not turn in their work. In a few instances, not all classes participated in all of the assignments.

Table 54 shows how many assignments were included for each pedagogical structure. For some assignments, more than one pedagogical structure was used. The total number of assignments totals more than twenty one since some assignments included more than one pedagogical structure.

Table 54

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedagogical Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of assignments structure was used</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overall Students’ Perceptions of the Pedagogical Structures**

Next, to answer the second research sub-question, “What were the students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures?” a description of students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures was reported and discussed. The data for the students’ perceptions was drawn from the students’ interviews about how the structures helped them to understand the academic concepts and vocabulary from the assignments. After each
assignment that they participated in, students were asked, “In today’s assignment, you participated in (here the pedagogical structures that were used were listed). How did these pedagogical structures help you to understand (here the academic concepts and vocabulary from the assignment were listed)?” Table 55 gives the overall tally of how many comments the students made about each structure that were either positive (+), negative (-), or mixed.

Table 55

*Overall Perceptions of the Pedagogical Structures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure perceptions</th>
<th>Modeling</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Independent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13+ two-1+</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>14+ six-1+</td>
<td>1+ 6-</td>
<td>15+ 5-4+-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 56 shows individual students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures.

Table 56

*Individual Students’ perceptions of the Pedagogical Structures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Teacher modeling</th>
<th>Guided discussion</th>
<th>Group work</th>
<th>Partner work</th>
<th>Independent work</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alejandro</td>
<td>2+ 1-</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>3+ 2-</td>
<td>1+ 1-</td>
<td>5+ 3-</td>
<td>16+3-3+-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td></td>
<td>4+ 1-</td>
<td>10+1-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josue</td>
<td>3+</td>
<td>2- 1-</td>
<td>2-</td>
<td>1+2-</td>
<td>4+6-1-</td>
<td>14+2-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>2+ 1-</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>2+ 1-</td>
<td>1-</td>
<td>2+ 2-</td>
<td>6+2-2-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman</td>
<td>3+ 1-</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>2+ 1-</td>
<td>1-</td>
<td>4+ 2-</td>
<td>11+5-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdiel</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>3+</td>
<td>1-</td>
<td>1+3-</td>
<td>7+4-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall Students’ Understanding of Vocabulary and Concepts

In order to address the sub-question, “How did the students’ work reflect their understanding of the academic concepts and vocabulary that were taught?” A document review chart was made after collecting all of the artifacts from the students. The artifacts included essay writing, reviews, assignments based on a novel, assignments based on short stories, and projects. The chart was created to summarize students’ performance on each assignment based on a rubric designed to determine whether the student was successful on the assignment or not. In addition, I drew from information from their first interview question about their understanding of the academic concepts and vocabulary that were taught for each assignment. In some cases, students were able to explain the concepts and use the vocabulary even though they were not able to complete the assignment successfully.

The artifacts collected were organized into five categories: Essay Practice (this included analyzing essays, writing essay outlines, and writing essays), Reviews, Short Stories, Novels, and Projects. Table 57 shows how many assignments were included for each category, how many artifacts were collected, and how many students were successful, partly successful, and unsuccessful.
Table 57

Students’ Understanding of Academic Concepts and Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Essay Writing</th>
<th>Reviews</th>
<th>Short Stories</th>
<th>Novels</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of assignments</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of artifacts</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly successful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsuccessful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individual Students’ Understanding of Vocabulary and Concepts

The artifacts from each assignment that students participated in were collected. Rubrics were created for each of the 21 assignments in order to determine whether students were successful, partially successful, or unsuccessful with the assignments. Table 58 shows how many assignments each student participated in as well as how many times they were successful, partially successful, or unsuccessful overall.

Table 58

Students’ Understanding of Academic Vocabulary and Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Alejandro</th>
<th>Silvia</th>
<th>Josue</th>
<th>David</th>
<th>Roman</th>
<th>Abdiel</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of assignments</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly successful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsuccessful</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following section, I will present my conclusions based on these findings. First, I will draw conclusions from the data on students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures. Then, I will present conclusions based on data related to students’
understandings of the academic concepts and vocabulary that were taught throughout the study.

**Conclusions**

In this section, I will draw conclusions based on the findings described in Chapter four and summarized in the chapter. I will begin with conclusions related to the first and second sub-questions: What pedagogical structures were used? and What were the students’ perceptions of the structures. The conclusions will be based on the overall results. However, it is important to examine both overall and individual data because, at times, there were significant differences among individuals. Although all the students were classified as being at the same level of English proficiency, there were differences among them. In addition, factors beyond the classroom have a strong impact on the academic achievement of all students, and particularly ELLs. For this reason, when there was considerable individual variation, I added conclusions based on insights gathered from the data on individuals.

Finally, I will present conclusions based on data gathered to answer the third sub-question: How did the students’ work reflect their understanding of the academic concepts and vocabulary that were taught? again based on the overall data and then considering individual variation.

**Conclusions Based on Overall Perceptions of the Pedagogical Structures**

In the following sections, I draw conclusions about each of the pedagogical structures based on the overall data. I will begin by discussing students’ overall perceptions and then write about their individual perceptions.
Teacher modeling is effective when teachers involve students and when students understand both what to do and how to do it.

Five assignments that were included in this study included teacher modeling. Teacher modeling was used by the cooperating teacher to demonstrate to students how they would do an assignment by themselves. Teacher modeling was often used along with other pedagogical structures such as group work, partner work, and independent work. For example, in one lesson, the cooperating teacher began by modeling for the students how to write an outline for an argumentative essay. As she modeled, she had students give input. After modeling, she had students work independently to write their own argumentative essay outline.

Overall, students’ perceptions of teacher modeling were positive. For the five teacher modeling assignments that students participated in, during interviews with the students, 10 comments were made. Of these, eight were rated as positive and two were rated as negative. What seemed to work about this pedagogical structure is that although the cooperating teacher was the one modeling, she had the students participate and give input as she went along. For one modeling assignment, the cooperating teacher had the students work with her to create an outline for an essay. As one student commented, “The way the teacher showed us how to do the outline was easy because she had us help her and that made me really think about what I was learning.”

On the other hand, if the assignment focused on concepts or vocabulary the students did not understand, the modeling did not always help them. Two comments made by students about teacher modeling were negative. Alejandro commented negatively once because he did not understand the concepts being modeled, and Roman
commented negatively simply because he was not paying attention. When the cooperating teacher modeled how to identify figurative language in a song the students did not feel that the teacher modeling was helpful. Roman did not remember the different types of figurative language so although the cooperating teacher showed them what to do, the student was not successful with the assignment.

Alejandro’s comments were both positive and negative. The student explained that he liked that the teacher modeled what they going to do but once he began working on the assignment, he had a difficult time since he wasn’t comfortable with the academic vocabulary for that assignment. Since he struggled with the academic vocabulary, he was not successful with the lesson even though the cooperating teacher had modeled what the students were going to do.

Overall, teacher modeling works for certain types of assignments, but when the teacher does not review academic concepts and vocabulary that the students are still not familiar with and when the teacher does not involve the students, the modeling is less effective in helping them to complete the assignments successfully.

A review of the data of individuals on teacher modeling confirms this overall conclusion. In general, teacher modeling is effective when students are engaged and have sufficient background and English proficiency to grasp the concepts and vocabulary being modeled.

**Guided discussions help students get ideas from classmates and review key concepts.**

Students participated in six assignments that included guided discussion. The cooperating teacher used guided discussion in order to engage students in a discussion
about the assignment. She often included the academic concepts and vocabulary from the assignment as part of the discussion so that students would begin to recognize and produce those terms when they spoke. Overall, the ten comments that students made about guided discussion were all positive.

What students seemed to especially like about guided discussions was that they were able to get ideas from each other. As one student said, “It was good because we were giving each other ideas.”

Another positive comment about guided discussion related specifically to the academic vocabulary that was the focus of the assignment. The student said, “The discussion helped me because it reminded me of more idioms so I could pick one for the project.”

Not only did students make positive comments about guided discussions, they also felt they were useful since academic concepts and vocabulary were often reviewed throughout the discussions. Therefore, guided discussions were well liked by the students and helped them build academic vocabulary and concepts.

Since all 10 comments were positive, there was no individual variation for guided discussion. This suggests that this structure should be used more often than the next three structures, all of which received negative comments.

**Group work is only effective when there is positive group interdependence.**

In his meta-analysis of studies on cooperative learning, Marzano (2001) concluded that organizing students into cooperative learning groups has a positive effect on learning. Four assignments students participated in included group work. The cooperating teacher put students into groups of three in order to give students the
opportunity to work together on assignments. Students were grouped in different ways. Generally, students chose their own groups or were asked to get into groups with students who sat close to them.

Of the 16 comments that were made about group work, nine were positive and seven were negative. Positive comments came from groups that had positive group interdependence (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). For example, one student liked working in a group because group members gave each other ideas. Silvia, for example, stated that the group work was helpful because all of the group members helped each other to complete the assignment.

Negative comments were often made when students did not know how to do the assignment, and they felt their group members either did not know how to do the assignment or did not want to participate in the assignment. In other cases, students’ did know how to do the assignment, but their group members did not. Alejandro was frustrated and commented that he did not find the group work helpful since he was the only person in the group who understood how to do the assignment.

These findings confirm Johnson and Johnson’s (1999) finding that effective groups need interpersonal and small group skills, group processing, positive interdependence, and face to face promotive interdependence. When these characteristics were not present, the group work was not effective.

Therefore, students considered group work to be useful when all members of the group generally understood what do and were able to help each other. Students had a negative perception of group work when other members of the group did not understand and or want to participate in the assignment.
Partner work is only effective when both students understand a task.

Like group work, partner work is only effective under certain conditions. Students participated in three assignments that included partner work. The cooperating teacher had students work in partners to complete assignments that focused on academic concepts and vocabulary. For the most part, students chose their own partner or were asked to work with the person sitting next to them. Of the seven comments made about partner work, six were negative and one was positive.

In many cases, students were negative about partner work when they did not know how to do the assignment, and their partner did not know either. Other times, students commented that they did not feel like doing the work, and their partner did not either.

Only one comment about partner work was positive. Silvia and her partner knew what to do and helped each other when they were unsure about a question.

Overall, students were negative about partner work. For example, Abdiel commented that when he was assigned to work with a partner, neither he nor his partner were motivated to complete the assignment. Josue stated that neither he nor his partner knew how to do the assignment. Students did not feel that it helped them since in most cases, when a student did not know how to do an assignment, their partner did not know either. This was also what students mentioned about not wanting to do the work. When working with a partner, if one did not want to do the work, the partner was not motivated to work either.

While many studies have shown the benefits of group work (Johnson & Johnson, 1999, Marzano, 2001), in the case of ELLs, it is essential that they have a clear
understanding of the task and a high enough level of English proficiency to complete the task.

**Independent work should only be assigned when students are well prepared.**

Students participated in nine assignments that involved independent work. Of the seventeen comments that were made about independent work, thirteen were positive eight were negative and two were mixed. When the assignment included academic concepts and vocabulary that the students understood, they had positive perceptions.

Silvia commented that one independent assignment was easy since she had done the reading ahead of time and felt prepared to complete the work. On the other hand, Josue commented that he had not done the reading and therefore, could not answer the questions on the assignment.

When responding to the interview question about independent work, Silvia commented, “It was ok. I knew how to do it and the teacher helped me when I had questions.” When they had not developed a good understanding of the academic concepts or vocabulary, they either had mixed or negative responses. One student stated, “It was ok because I know the idioms but maybe with a partner I could have checked my answers.” Another student said, “It did not help me. If we could have reviewed the words first or been able to help each other, it would have been better.”

A review of the data of individuals on independent work confirms the overall conclusion. Students’ perceptions of independent work were negative when they were working with academic concepts and vocabulary they were not familiar with. According to their comments, they would have felt more positive if they had the
opportunity to review the academic concepts or vocabulary before working independently. They also felt that having a partner to talk through the assignments with them would have given them a more positive outlook. This comment was interesting since in general, all of the students had negative perceptions about partner work.

Conclusions About Students’ Perceptions of the Pedagogical Structures

Although the cooperating teacher used a gradual release model, ELLs need to be carefully monitored. When they are moved too quickly from one pedagogical structure to the next, they simply cannot finish the assignments.

Fisher and Frey’s (2009) model consists of the teacher modeling, then the teacher using guided discussion and interaction with the whole class, the students working together in small groups or with partners as the teacher closely monitors their work, and finally, the students working independently.

Although the teacher in the present research used the same structures, each lesson or series of lessons didn’t follow the complete sequence. In addition, it is crucial that the teacher monitors the students and does not move to the next stage until the students are ready. Too often, teachers model and then put students in groups or have them work individually. This seems to be what occurred throughout the course of this study.

Overall, students liked the pedagogical structures when they could be successful with them. They did not like them when they were pushed into them before they were ready.
Students’ Understanding of Academic Vocabulary and Concepts.

Next, I will make conclusions about the individual students’ understanding of the academic vocabulary and concepts that were included in the assignments. These conclusions are based on students’ assignments that were evaluated by rubrics as well as students’ answers to the interview question: “In today’s lesson you reviewed (the academic vocabulary or concept was listed here). In your own words, explain what this is.”

According to the rubrics, students were successful on 36 assignments, partly successful on seven, and unsuccessful on 14. Below, I will present the conclusions that I have drawn from the findings.

**Students can demonstrate that they have learned academic concepts and vocabulary under certain conditions.**

The first conclusion is that students can demonstrate that they have learned academic concepts and vocabulary under certain conditions. One condition that helped them was when the teacher modeled the lesson before they did it. Teachers should use teacher modeling to help students understand how to do their assignment. It is also important that teachers have students participate as they model. This helps the students’ to think through the assignment before they did it on their own.

Another condition that helped students be successful was working with partners or groups that had positive group interdependence (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Teachers need to understand the characteristics of effective groups (Johnson & Johnson) so that they can help students to have positive experiences when working in groups or with partners. For most group assignments, heterogeneous grouping is best (Lou and others,
1996). When students work in heterogeneous groups, they can help each other to be successful on the assignments.

Many of the independent assignments were quizzes based on reading the students were asked to do ahead of time. When students did the reading, they were successful on these assignments. Teachers can give students the opportunity to be successful on independent assignments by making sure they have the necessary information before giving them the assignment. For example, if students were not able to read ahead of time, teachers could give them time in class to read or engage students in a jigsaw activity which would be less time consuming and more effective (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). This sets the students up for success rather than failure.

*Sometimes students were able to explain academic vocabulary and concepts but were not able to complete their assignments.*

The next conclusion that I found was that sometimes students were able to explain the academic vocabulary and concepts but were not able to complete their assignments successfully. Researchers such as Abedi (2001) argue that ELLs need extra time on assignments. He explains that although other modifications such as Spanish/English dictionaries and graphic organizers will not be as effective for ELLs if they are not also provided additional time. When ELLs are given time, they can be successful with the assignments.

Studies have shown that ELLs develop oral English proficiency before written proficiency (Cummins, 1984). For this reason, teachers should consider offering alternative assessments so that students can show in other ways that they do understand the academic vocabulary and concepts (Tannenbaum, 1996). For example, students could
give an oral presentation or do a skit. These alternate assignments would give students the opportunity to show that they do understand the academic vocabulary and concepts.

**Conclusions About Students’ Understanding of Academic Vocabulary and Concepts**

Long-term ELLs can demonstrate their knowledge of academic vocabulary and concepts when certain supports are in place. In this study, teacher modeling, groups with positive interdependence, and being prepared were all helpful for the students.

Teachers need to keep in mind that ELLs need additional time to complete assignments. In addition, since ELLs develop oral proficiency before written proficiency, it is important that teachers offer alternate assessments to show they understand the academic vocabulary and concepts.

If educators put the recommendations presented throughout these conclusions into practice, long-term ELLs would have the opportunity to be successful on their assignments in their language arts class.

In what ways does teaching academic concepts and vocabulary in language arts to secondary long-term English learners impact their academic success on their assignments in their English language arts class?

**Implications**

**Overview**

In this section, I will present practical suggestions for addressing the issues that have been raised in the research. I will address what should be done as well as how it can be done.

Although a gradual release model (Fisher and Frey, 2009) is ideal for all students, ELLs need a modified version. It is not enough for the teacher to model an
assignment and then expect that the students can then do the assignment with a partner, group, or on their own.

**Teacher Modeling Should Be Followed by Teacher Monitoring**

Students had overall positive perceptions about teacher modeling. Marzano (2001) writes that “learning a complex skill mandates that a person properly demonstrates the skill (p. 156). Students commented that they liked it when the cooperating teacher had them participate as she modeled. Teachers should do this any time they are modeling because as one student commented, it helped her to think through the assignment. Once they have modeled, teachers need to actively monitor the students as they work either with groups, partners, or independently.

Monitoring can be done by walking around and engaging in conversations with the students about how they are doing on the assignment. Johnson and Johnson (1999) explain that the most effective ways that a teacher can influence the interaction of group members “are in the instruction provided before group interaction and in the monitoring of group interactions” (p.244).

As teachers monitor, they can have the students show them what they are working on so that they can assess whether or not the student is on the right track. If the student is not on the right track, the teacher can intervene and work with that student.

Monitoring also helps with students who are not motivated to work. In most cases, when students know that the teacher is walking around and will be checking their progress, they will be more likely to participate in the class work.

One of the biggest advantages of monitoring the students is that it gives teachers valuable information about students. They have the opportunity to see students
strengths as well as areas of need. This information can be used to determine what students already know and what they need to know in order to be successful with future assignments. Teachers can use the information to create future assignments.

**Group and Partner Work Should Be Productive**

Many of the comments about group and partner work showed that this pedagogical structure was often unproductive. What seemed to happen in many cases was that all group or partner members did not know the necessary academic vocabulary and concepts to complete the lessons or were not motivated. Not only would teacher modeling help but groups should be organized following Johnson and Johnson’s (1999) five critical features of effective groups.

When teachers have students work in groups, they need to help them develop the necessary skills. For this to happen, the teacher must plan for as well as organize group work carefully. As mentioned above, when students are working in groups, they need to be monitored and guided when needed.

When organizing groups, there are many things that teachers should consider. To begin, the teacher should determine whether or not groups should be organized by ability level. Lou, Abrami, Spence, Poulsen, Chambers, and D’Apollonia (1996) found that students of low ability placed in homogeneous groups performed worse than low ability students in heterogeneous groups. Teachers should consider the assignment and what type of grouping would work best.

Marzano (2001) argues that cooperative groups should be kept small in size. Lou et al. (1996) found that small teams of three to four members were more effective than larger groups. Marzano also explains that group and partner work should be used
consistently but not overused. He warns that if cooperative learning is overused, “students have an insufficient amount of time to practice independently the skills and processes they must master” (p.89).

**Teachers Should Include Alternative Assessments as Part of their Curriculum**

In their interview responses, students were often able to explain the academic vocabulary and concepts they were learning but were not always successful on their assignments. Tannenbaum (1996) recommends a variety of alternative assessments that should be available for ELLs. These alternative assessments include non-verbal assessment strategies such as performing hands-on tasks or to act out vocabulary, concepts, or events, the use of graphic organizers to help keep students focused and interested, and oral performances or presentations. Gottlieb (2005) also recommends that teachers of ELLs use of a variety of approaches such as group and partner activities and response formats such as graphic organizers and journal entries. The researcher explains that these types of assessments are formative assessments that give teachers the information they need to plan instruction.

If teachers would use more alternative assessments, they would have more important information regarding what their students know and what their needs are.

**Make the Gradual Release Model as Gradual as Necessary**

Fisher and Frey’s (2009) gradual release model is ideal for ELLs. The teacher models, then uses guided discussion and interaction with the whole class. Then, the students’ work together in small groups or with partners as the teacher closely monitors their work. Finally, the students work independently.

In the case of long-term ELLs, it is essential that this model be used but that the
release only occur when students have a strong grasp of the academic vocabulary and concepts that are being taught. Throughout the study, there were many times that after teacher modeling, students were put directly into groups or asked to work independently. Often, students were not yet comfortable enough with the academic vocabulary and concepts to be successful with assignments. They need multiple opportunities for guided practice before they are ready to work independently. Therefore, teachers should be aware of their students’ understanding levels and plan lessons accordingly.

Future Research

In the following sections, I will discuss what further could be studied in the area of this research. When stating what should be studied, I will also indicate why it is important.

How Do ELLs Become Long-Term ELLs?

Overall, more research with long-term ELLs is needed. Although researchers such as Olsen (2010) and Menken and Kleyn (2010) and Freeman and Freeman (2009) have made significant findings based on their research, more long-term studies need to be conducted. If more studies were done in which ELLs in different types of programs were studied over a period of several years, it would be possible to draw conclusions about which programs help ELLs experience academic success rather than become long-term ELLs.

What are Best Practices for Long-Term ELLs?

Although a great deal of research has been done about best practices for ELLs, more research also needs to be done regarding best practices for long-term ELLs. This study had it’s limitations since only six students were studied over a period of a few
months. Studies with more long-term ELLs over longer periods of time in different content area classes with different types of pedagogical structures are needed. The more information available, the better long-term ELLs can be served.

What Do Educators Know About Long-Term ELLs?

Not only is more research of how long-term ELLs become long-term ELLs and best practices for long-term ELLs needed, there also needs to be research done on educators who work with long-term ELLs. It is important to know how much these educators know about long-term ELLs and their needs. Information gained from this type of research would give educational leaders the information they need to plan for the necessary professional development for their teachers. If teachers were better informed about who the long-term ELLs are and how to meet their needs, these students would have a greater chance of succeeding.

How Can Academic concepts and vocabulary Benefit Long-Term ELLs?

Biber (1986), Corson (1997), Gibbons (2009), and Schleppegrell and Go (2009) among others have written about the importance of teaching students academic concepts and vocabulary. More research needs to be done on the effects of teaching academic concepts and vocabulary to long-term ELLs. Not only that, but what are the most effective ways to teach them academic concepts and vocabulary to long-term ELLs. This research would provide teachers of long-term ELLs valuable information about how to help this population succeed academically.

Overall Conclusions

This study was based on the research question: In what ways does teaching academic concepts and vocabulary in language arts to secondary long-term English learners impact
their academic success on their assignments in their English language arts class? My sub-questions were:

(1) What specific pedagogical structures for teaching academic concepts and vocabulary were used?

(2) What were the students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures that were used?

(3) How did the students’ work reflect their understanding of the academic concepts and the academic vocabulary that were taught?

In order to answer these questions, six long-term ELLs were studied for several months. The students participated in 21 assignments and were interviewed after each one about their understanding of the academic vocabulary and concepts included in the assignment. Students’ assignments were collected and rubrics were created to assess students’ success.

My findings were focused around my three research sub-questions. To answer the first research question: “What pedagogical structures were used?” the different pedagogical structures that the participating teacher used were described. These pedagogical structures included teacher modeling, guided discussions, group work, partner work, and independent work. To answer the second research question, “What were the students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures?” a description of students’ perceptions of the pedagogical structures was reported and discussed. In order to address the sub-question, “How did the students’ work reflect their understanding of the academic concepts and vocabulary that were taught?” students’ assignments and interview responses were analyzed.

After presenting the findings, I presented conclusions based on data related
to students’ understandings of the academic concepts and vocabulary that were taught throughout the study. I began by presenting conclusions drawn about overall perceptions of the pedagogical structures. These conclusions included: Teacher modeling is effective when teachers involve students and when students understand both what to do and how to do it, guided discussions help students get ideas from classmates and review key concepts, group work is only effective when there is positive group interdependence, partner work is only effective when both students understand a task, and independent work should only be assigned when students are well prepared.

Next, I presented conclusions about students’ understanding of academic vocabulary and concepts. This sub-question was central to answering the main question. The conclusions included: Long-term ELLs can demonstrate their knowledge of academic vocabulary and concepts when certain supports when teachers provide additional time to complete assignments, and when teachers use multiple assessments.

After the conclusions, I presented implications. These implications include: teacher modeling should be followed by teacher monitoring, group and partner work should be carefully structured, teachers should include alternative assessments as part of their curriculum, and teachers of long-term ELLs need to make the gradual release model as gradual as necessary.

After the implications, I discussed what further could be studied in the area of this research. The future research recommendations I included were: How do long-term ELLs become long-term ELLs? What are best practices for long-term ELLs? What do educators know about long-term ELLs? and How can the development of academic language benefit long-term ELLs?
References


Cummins, J. (1981). The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students *Schooling and language minority students:*
A theoretical framework (pp. 3-49). Los Angeles: Evaluation, Dissemination and Assessment Center, California State University, Los Angeles.


and struggling readers: How to help students succeed across content areas.

Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.


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Appendix A

Name____________________________________

English Teacher____________________________________

1. Where were you born? (If you were born outside of the U.S., go on to #2. If you were born in the U.S., skip to #5).
2. How old were you when you first came to the United States?
3. Have you moved back to your native country at any time since moving to the U.S.? If yes, how many times and for how long?
4. When you started school in the U.S., was it in English or Spanish? Try to remember as much as possible about your elementary classes—were some in English and some in Spanish or both? Give as much detail as possible.
5. What was your first language (which language did you speak first?)
6. If English was not your first language, how old were you when you first started to learn (in school) in English?
7. At this point in your life, do you feel more comfortable speaking in English, Spanish, or both? Explain.
8. Do you feel more confident doing school work in English or Spanish?
9. What grades do you typically get in school (on average) in each subject:
   10. English:
   11. Math:
   12. Science:
   13. History:
14. Electives:

15. What do you think are your strengths in school?

16. What other strengths do you feel you have (not related to school)?

___________________________
## Appendix B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Student</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary or Concept Taught</th>
<th>Pedagogical Structure Used</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>In What Ways (If Any) Does Student Show Evidence of Understanding and using the Academic Vocabulary and Concepts?</th>
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Appendix C

1. In Today’s lesson, you learned about (academic vocabulary and concepts from the lesson). In your own words, explain what you understand about this topic.

2. In today’s lesson, your teacher (explain what pedagogical structures the teacher used). How did this help or not help you to understand (name main topic of the lesson)?
Appendix D

Researcher’s Journal Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>What academic vocabulary and concepts were the focus of the lesson?</th>
<th>What pedagogical structures were used?</th>
<th>What changes were made from original plan?</th>
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Appendix E

Data Recording Form

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedagogical Structures</th>
<th>Academic Vocabulary/Concepts</th>
<th>Student Responses</th>
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