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The power of performance: using songs and poetry to motivate English Language Learners to read in a third grade classroom

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THE POWER OF PERFORMANCE: USING SONGS AND POETRY TO MOTIVATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS TO READ IN A THIRD GRADE CLASSROOM

by

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A Thesis

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all of my wonderfully supportive family members and friends. I would like to especially thank my husband, Sean, for kindly putting up with my venting throughout my graduate studies and the writing of this thesis. Without the love and encouragement from these special people in my life, I am not sure I would have made it through. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

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Abstract

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The purpose of the study was to examine middle school students' motivation to read. The goal was to see what happens to seventh grade students' motivation to read independently when given the opportunity to self-select and discuss books in a classroom setting that mimics a real-world café. Motivation profiles, interest surveys, reflections, and student work were all analyzed. The focus group of students demonstrated changes in how students viewed themselves as readers and their desire to read independently for leisure. The implications for teaching in a seventh grade classroom are discussed. A complete data analysis provided the major assertions and implications about the research topic.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"Are we going to learn a new song this week?" Marco asked excitedly. "I practiced the Star Spangled Banner song over the weekend!" I couldn't help but smile as some of the other students began to chime in with their own announcements about completely voluntary weekend rehearsals. This couldn't be the same students from less than a week ago when school began. Although my students instantly seemed like a great group, they were not as enthusiastic about singing songs on the first day of school. When I told them we would be learning songs and performing them for the class across the hall, to say I got mixed reviews would be an understatement. Most of my students seemed agreeable to the part about learning songs and singing them in the classroom, but the performing part had them very nervous. Some of my students commented that they hated singing. Others said they did not like the song I chose for the first week. I started to feel slightly defeated on that first day. "What if my research question was a bust? What if these students did not like singing as much as my students from last year did? How was I going to convince them to give it a real shot?"

I pushed through the first week allowing them to express their complaints. It was not until after the first performance that there was a breakthrough. When we got back into the classroom, Joselyn said, "That wasn't so bad." We had a group discussion about performing. I had the kids tell me what made them nervous, and I explained to them my reasoning for having them perform. Once there was a general sense of understanding, the students decided to be on board. Their comments became more positive, and they started

feeding off of one another's energy. "Maybe this would work after all." I thought to myself.

Origin of Question

As a child and young student, I was always an avid reader. I enjoyed reading both in the classroom and at home, and also excelled in my schoolwork. Unfortunately, I have come to the realization that this is not the case for many of the third graders I teach. The majority of the students I work with are being brought up in Spanish speaking homes, where one or both of their parents speak little to no English. This makes it difficult for my students to learn how to read, write, and speak in English without support at home. Although my students are not placed in bilingual education classrooms, many of them receive English as a Second Language (ESL) services. The struggles they face with learning English are connected to the struggles they face when learning to read. I have noticed many of my students becoming frustrated when they feel reading is too difficult. This causes them to lack the motivation to read independently at home or in school. A lower amount of independent reading is critical considering, "The amount of free reading done outside of school has consistently been found to relate to growth in vocabulary, reading comprehension, verbal fluency, and general information" (Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding 1988; Greaney 1980; Guthrie and Greaney 1991; Taylor, Frye, and Maruyama 1990). Too little independent reading is a serious problem considering studies show that the amount of time spent on reading is directly correlated to not only reading achievement, but academic achievement on a whole. "Students who read independently become better readers, score higher on achievement tests in all subject areas, and have greater content knowledge than those who do not" (Krashen 1993; Cunningham and

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Stanovich 1991; Stanovich and Cunningham 1993). We have known this information for a long time, but knowing the problem and fixing it are two very different things.

When attending a reading workshop over the summer lead by Dr. Timothy Rasinski, I was introduced to many ideas centered around the importance of fluency instruction. One idea that stood out was the concept of using poetry and songs for reading instruction. He stressed the importance of performance as well. "If the passage, whether it is a song, script, speech, or poem, is meant to be performed, it has to be rehearsed or practiced repeatedly. The performance of a passage makes the practice meaningful to students" (Rasinski, Homan, & Biggs, 2009, p. 197). I had heard about the power poetry and songs can have on reading and reading fluency before, but I hadn't given it much thought. I certainly hadn't thought about the performance aspect to it. I had dismissed the idea as too childish for my eight and nine year olds. As Dr. Rasinski continued his presentation, I began to think about how much my previous students enjoyed playing *Just Dance* in the classroom during my teacher-led PE periods. I recalled them not only dancing, but also singing loudly along with the familiar lyrics to songs they hear on the radio. It was then that I decided on a topic for my teacher research. I realized singing nursery rhymes and reciting poems such as "Humpty Dumpty" may be too childish for my students, but there are many songs and poems on their level that could benefit them. I was immediately drawn to the fun aspect of singing and reciting poetry as part of my reading instruction. I felt strongly that the kids would enjoy it, which would help them to want to read more, and I would simultaneously be able to help them improve in reading.

Prior to this workshop, during the summer reading clinic at Rowan University, I was assigned the theorist, John T. Guthrie, for my research project. I learned a great deal

about motivation and engagement while studying his work. When reading, I connected with many of his ideas about motivation that rang true to myself and the students I work with. One quote that seemed to bring everything together was, "A fusion of motivation and cognition, skill and will, of interest and thought is integral to reading engagement" (Guthrie & Alvermann, 1999, pg. 4). It became clear to me that I could learn all the information I wanted about what students need to know about reading, have a million strategies to help them with the cognitive side to reading, but if they weren't interested and motivated to read, it wouldn't help most students. As I continued reading Guthrie's work, I realized that I needed to share my love of reading with my students. If I could help them believe that reading was fun, they would be more motivated to read on their own. I knew then that I wanted to use my teacher research as an opportunity to build on and share this knowledge with others. This ultimately led me to the idea of combining my interest in motivation with my interest with fluency, songs, and poetry. I was able to come up with a research question that would allow me to investigate both at the same time. I also knew, as discussed previously, I needed to look more closely at the English Language Learners in my classroom in order to learn more about what will help these students.

Research Purpose

This study investigated how using poetry and songs during reading instruction in a third grade classroom impacted students' attitude and motivation towards reading. When collecting data, I looked at how both the students' reading fluency and overall reading achievement was effected by singing and reciting poetry. Due to the student

population where the research took place, and the challenges they face, the participants in this research were English Language Learners.

Research Question

I went through a few different versions of my research question before making a final decision. I knew I wanted to look at motivation and the use of songs and poetry, therefore the changes had to do with which students specifically I wanted to study. I first thought to include reluctant readers, struggling readers, and English Language Learners. After considering the advice of my thesis advisor, I decided to focus on one group of students. Because of the challenges facing the ELL students in my classroom, I felt this group was the most in need of further research. I decided to limit my study to these students, and came up with the final version of my research question: "What happens when poetry and songs are used to motivate English Language Learners to read in a third grade classroom?" I became very excited to conduct my research once my question was solidified. I felt it met the requirements of a good research question, most importantly being, the results would help influence my own instruction as well as the instruction of others in order to positively impact students.

Thesis Outline

In chapter one, which you have just read, I have provided an introduction to my research and research question, the origin of my question, and the purpose behind my research. In chapter two, there will be a review of past and current literature surrounding the topics that were studied through my research question. Chapter three looks at the methodology and context of the study. You will get familiar with the community, school,

and participants involved in the research. Chapter four will include a complete

explanation and analysis of the data collected throughout the study. Finally, chapter five

will provide a conclusion, including assertions that can be made with support from the

previous chapters, and implications for further related research.

<center>**Chapter 2**</center>

<center>**Literature Review**</center>

Background on Fluency Instruction

  For many years, reading fluency has not been considered an important component of literacy instruction in the United States. Teachers have been more focused on students' ability to decode words accurately and comprehend text, and less concerned with whether or not students are able to decode words automatically, without using a large amount of "brain power" to do so. There has also been a lack of attention given to the importance of expressive, oral reading. Rasinski, Homan, & Biggs (2009) highlight this issue by stating, "Teachers and reading scholars were more interested in moving students as quickly as possible into silent reading, not the level of expressiveness that expert readers embed in their oral reading" (p. 193). Most teachers and professionals would agree that the goal of literacy instruction is to increase students' ability to accurately read and comprehend text. Rasinski's research in 2004 found that according to assessments, measuring reading fluency (reading speed or prosodic oral reading) are significantly correlated to reading comprehension and reading achievement. Other research tells us that not only is it significantly correlated, but that reading fluency instruction results in improvements in students' reading fluency, and more importantly, in their overall reading achievement (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003). This research shows that in order to meet the goals of effective literacy instruction, instruction in reading fluency must be a valued component.

Defining Fluency

Although it is known that reading fluency instruction has its place in overall literacy instruction, the issue of what aspects of reading fluency need to be taught and assessed, seemed to evolve. In, *The Fluent Reader* (2010), Rasinski defines reading fluency by stating it refers to a readers' ability to read words effortlessly and efficiently (automaticity and accuracy) and with meaningful expression (prosody). Before that, in a 2006 article for the International Reading Association, he gives credit to Hudson, Lane, and Pullen for defining and describing the three key elements of reading fluency: accuracy in word decoding, automaticity in recognizing words, and appropriate use of prosody or meaningful oral expression while reading (p. 704).

Although three elements of reading fluency were found to be necessary, most of the assessments for reading fluency were centered around only one, automaticity, by measuring reading rate or wpm (words per minute). This method seemed to be determined as the only quantifiable way to measure a student's ability to read fluently. Teachers found that they could also calculate the cwpm, (correct words per minute) which would include another element: accuracy. This leaves the third element of reading fluency, prosody, still missing from the assessments given to students. Because of the exclusion of this element, teachers tended to focus on accuracy and automaticity during fluency instruction, rather than meaningful expression and intonation. Researchers found that more and more students would ask during assessments, "Should I read this as fast as I can?" In response to this, Rasinski (2006) states, "The result of such a focus is faster reading with little improvement on comprehension, which is the ultimate goal of reading and reading instruction" (p. 705). This research left us with a solid definition of reading

fluency, knowledge of the issues and limits surrounding traditional reading fluency assessments, and information about the negative effects associated with leaving prosody out of fluency instruction.

Effective Strategies for Fluency Instruction

Rasinski feels that all three elements of reading fluency (automaticity, accuracy, and prosody) should be integrated and taught together. The connections between the three elements should be modeled and taught to students in order for them to understand what good reading fluency sounds like. Three main strategies were researched and found to be effective. They included: read alouds, assisted reading, and repeated reading.

Reading aloud to students provides teachers with the opportunity to model fluent reading. This is an important part of instruction, because students are able to see what is expected of them and attempt to mimic the behaviors. It is even more effective if students are able to follow along and see the words as the teacher reads them.

Assisted reading involves an expert reader scaffolding instruction and working alongside students in order to help them make the transition from watching a model, to reading independently. Assisted reading can occur in many forms including: choral reading, paired reading, audio recorded reading, and more. Scaffolding instruction is never an exact science. Vygotsky taught us that it requires teachers to know their students' "zone of proximal development" and differentiate instruction in order to move them toward independence.

The third strategy is repeated reading. In Samuels's (1979) seminal work, the instructional strategy of repeated readings was studied to determine its effectiveness on

increasing reading fluency. The idea was that the more students practiced reading a piece of text, the better they would become at reading it fluently with automaticity, accuracy, and expression. Samuels found not only this to be true, but also that when students moved to a new passage, their initial readings were read at a higher level of fluency and comprehension than the previous passage, even when the new passage was equally as difficult or even more challenging than the first. In the time since Samuels' research, other researchers such as: Dowhower (1987), Therrien (2004), and Gorsuch & Taguchi (2008), have also pointed the value of repeated readings as an effective instructional tool for teaching fluency.

With all of these instructional strategies, it is important for students to be motivated to practice reading the passages over and over again. One way to do this, is for students to perform the passages for an audience. Rasinski (2009) states, "The performance of a passage makes the practice meaningful to students" (p.197). If students know they will have to read the text aloud in front of their classmates or parents, they will be more prone to practice it and make sure they sound as good as possible when reading.

Materials and Resources for Fluency Instruction

The final area surrounding fluency instruction in the classroom involves what materials and resources should be used when engaging students in fluency instruction. If fluency instruction should take the form of mostly oral reading with a focus on prosody, it can be assumed that certain texts would lend themselves more toward practicing and performing. Rasinski (2009) explains, "Poetry, songs and song lyrics, rhetoric, plays (usually in the form of reader's theater scripts), and other texts written with a sense of the

author's voice are among the texts that we find lend themselves most fittingly to fluency

instruction" (p. 197). If students are to be expected to repeatedly read, and ultimately

perform passages for an audience, it makes sense to choose materials that are typically

performed. In the past, students have been asked to read nonfiction passages for fluency

practice. This genre does not fit as well with the overall goals of fluent reading, and can

be especially difficult for struggling readers and English Language Learners because of

the vocabulary.

Songs and Poetry as Good Resources for Teaching Reading

As stated above, songs and poetry are considered appropriate and effective

materials for teaching reading and reading fluency. This has to do with the performance

quality they allow for, the expressiveness of the author's voice, and the melody they

create. How many times have you gotten a song stuck in your head, and find yourself

repeating it seemingly against your will? That effect is exactly what we are looking for

when teaching our students to read. Biggs, Homan, and their colleagues (2008) conducted

research involving the use of a singing software program to teach reading and reading

fluency. The software program, Tune in to Reading (TIR), requires students to first listen

to songs and silently read the words. Next, students were asked to sing the songs aloud

repeatedly (three times), and record their best version. The software program would

provide students with immediate feedback about their reading/singing. In the initial

middle school study, students used the program for 30 minutes a day, three days a week.

The treatment group gained more than a year and a half in overall reading achievement in

nine weeks. Furthermore, after the students stopped using the program, they continued to

make to make significant growth in reading. Students who had not used the software made no significant growth.

In another study conducted by Rasinski and Stevenson (2005), first grade students practiced reading and rehearsing poetry with their parents every night. The results of the study showed that students who were at most risk for failure in reading, made almost two-and-a-half times the progress in reading rate when compared to the students who read the poetry with their parents, but did not rehearse it. Although the students were asked to focus on reciting the poetry with expression and meaning, reading rate and other factors related to good reading also improved.

Theories on the Importance of Motivation

According to Guthrie & Alvermann (1999), "A fusion of motivation and cognition, skill and will, of interest and thought is integral to reading engagement" (p. 4). Guthrie goes on to explain in many of his studies how an increase in reading engagement leads to an overall increase in reading achievement.

Other researchers have also given credit to motivation and attitude toward reading, as it relates to reading achievement. The Commission on Reading in its summary of research (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985) concluded that, "becoming a skilled reader requires…learning that written material can be interesting" (p. 18). In order to show students this, they must be exposed to a variety of different types of literature in order for them to find something that interests them personally. In a psycholinguistic analysis of reading, Smith (1988) observed that "the emotional response to reading…is

the primary reason most readers read, and probably the primary reason most nonreaders do not read" (p. 177).

In her transactional theory, Rosenblatt (1978), describes how each reader brings their own personal experience to reading text. She also believed that an aesthetic response to reading, which is based on the reader's feelings, is more important that an efferent response, which is based on facts. She would say that connecting the students' values, culture, interests, and personal feelings to their reading experiences will increase their overall success.

Finally, Wixson and Lipson (in press) acknowledge that "the student's attitude toward reading is a central factor affecting reading performance." As stated in chapter one, if students are not motivated to read independently, that will lead to a decrease in time spent on reading, which will ultimately lead to a decrease in reading achievement. Knowing how important motivation is to student reading achievement is the first piece of the puzzle. Understanding and defining what motivation is, and what it looks like in the classroom is the next piece.

Defining Motivation for Reading and Learning

Motivation is, "the state or condition of being motivated or having a strong reason to act or accomplish something." Students who are struggling or reluctant readers have trouble coming up with strong reasons to read or accomplish the often difficult task of becoming a good reader. Bandura (1986) came up with a social cognitive theory that made connections to motivation, students, and classroom practices. Bandura (1986) suggests that motivation (or a lack thereof) is the result of an individual's self-efficacy

related to a task. Bandura defines self-efficacy as the beliefs we have about ourselves that cause us to make choices, put forth effort, and persist in the face of difficulty. As for a classroom implication, Bandura notes that one of the most powerful sources of self-efficacy is mastery experience. Mastery experience has to do with experiencing success, and continuing to work at a task until mastery is achieved. In order for our students to have the drive to *want* to continue trying to complete a task successfully, they must be motivated to do so.

Instructional Strategies to Support Motivation

After defining and discussing the importance of motivation leading to engagement, many researchers and theorists have come up with instructional strategies or practices to support motivation and engagement. As Bandura stated, experiencing success and mastery experience is one example. Another method that is widely acknowledged as a strategy that enhances motivation is student choice. Allowing young children to make even a minimal task choice increased learning from the task and enhanced subsequent interest in the activity (Cordova & Lepper, 1996; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). This choice could be the text they read, who they read with, or even where in the room they read. Worthy and McKool (1996) found that allowing students to make choices about their reading material increased the likelihood that they would engage more in reading. In addition, Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) suggest that providing genuine student choices increases effort and commitment to reading. All of these researchers found that student choice positively impacts both student motivation and student engagement in reading.

Focus on Assessment

Similarities between the lack of fluency instruction and focus on motivation, revolve around the issue of assessment. One problem that occurs, is that teachers attempt to teach only "tested" reading skills such as: accuracy and comprehension. If these skills have been determined to show that their students are improving in reading according to the assessment, then that is what they are usually taught to focus instruction on. Teachers are often unaware of the underlying elements of motivation and fluency. The second problem is the supposed "inability" to effectively assess and instruct these two areas. Athey (1985) suggested that one reason for this tendency is that the affective aspects of reading tend to be ill-defined and to involve "shadowy variables" (p. 527) difficult to conceptualize, measure, and address instructionally. This determination put measuring motivation on the backburner in terms of reading assessments that were administered to students. Since then, professionals have come up with more reliable and accurate ways to measure student motivation. These surveys, scales, and assessments have been found to be valuable tools in learning the necessary information about student attitude and motivation toward reading, that will assist teachers in how to best instruct them.

Reading Strategies for English Language Learners

Many cultures and ethnicities are represented in today's classrooms and schools. Teachers need to be trained in effective strategies for teaching all different types of students from diverse backgrounds. This study will focus on English Language Learners whose primary language is Spanish. Culturally responsive instruction is a way for teachers to adjust to the changing demographics of students while providing quality

reading instruction. Kathryn Au defines culturally responsive instruction as "teaching that allows students to succeed academically by building on background knowledge and experiences gained in the home and community" (Au, 2009). Au believes that in order for students to make important connections to their learning, teachers must find ways to incorporate the students' values and cultures into the curriculum.

Peregoy and Boyle (2005) discuss many strategies for teaching English Language Learners in their text, *Reading, Writing, and Learning in ESL*. They suggest singing songs at least once a day in the classroom. They claim all students can participate on some level, regardless of their English proficiency. This brings an element of unity into the classroom that can work to invite everyone into singing along. "Songs also promote a feeling of unity in the class, particularly important when differences among students prevail" (p. 143). Although music is generally considered universal, it can also be used in a culturally responsive way. Students should be encouraged to sing songs from their own culture, in their own language. This will only help motivate students to continue singing and reading song lyrics in English.

The authors also promote the use of poetry as a strategy for teaching students who are learning English. They suggest having students dramatize the poems, and after rehearsing them, recite the poem as a performance for the class. They stress that choosing the "right" poem is an important aspect of the strategy. Teachers should choose poems that are filled with emotion, attitude, and opinion. These poems will make for the best performances. Teaching unfamiliar vocabulary seen in poems is critical for English Language Learners. The authors suggest providing students with a copy of the poem with room for them to draw pictures to remind them of what the words mean. They can also

use the blank space to make connections just as they would do with other types of literature.

Variety is key to teaching all students, including English Language Learners. There must be variety in the reading materials (books, songs, poems, etc.), ways students are reading (orally, silently, chorally, etc.), ways students are grouped (individually, paired, small group, etc.), and the ways they present or perform (singing, reciting poetry, reader's theater, etc.). Students who are having fun and learning at the same time are much more likely to have a positive outlook about reading, and experience success in and out of the school environment.

Conclusion

The common themes that surfaced in this literature review, had to do with fluency, motivation, songs and poetry, and English Language Learners. Students who are struggling to learn English are often unmotivated to read independently due to the difficulty of the task and frustration. This causes them to fall further and further behind in school because they are unable to easily read texts and complete complex tasks associated with those texts. They also usually lack the fluency skills they need due to a focus on decoding and reading comprehension. This study will look to apply prior information gained from research on effective fluency, motivation, and ELL strategies, in order to gain new information on what happens when songs, poetry, and performance are used to motivate third grade, English Language Learners to read.

Chapter 3

Methodology

School

This teacher research study took place in a third grade classroom, at a K-8 elementary/middle school. The school used to be the town's high school, and still holds more students than the current high school. The school is located in a low economic, urban area, where gang violence is among the top concerns for its citizens. Many of the families are migrant farmworkers making less than minimum wage. 100% of the students receive free breakfast, lunch, and dinner (if they stay for an afterschool program). Although it is a public school, the students are required to wear uniforms for various reasons that include: cost effective for parents, inability for students to promote gang colors or symbols in school, and making an "even playing field" for all students where dress is concerned. The school is considered a focus school by the New Jersey Department of Education because of its low subgroup performance. The RAC (Regional Achievement Center) team works with the school to create goals and provide the school with the necessary materials and training to meet those goals. Because of the school's status as a focus school, they are strongly recommended to use the Model Curriculum for Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics instruction. The Model Curriculum framework is aligned with the Common Core State Standards, and is modeled after the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers. Although this is the curriculum used to teach students, teachers at the school have the freedom to choose their instructional materials, their daily schedule, and the way they deliver instruction to

students. The only requirement is for the standards to be taught, and for students to be prepared to take the Model Curriculum test at the end of each of the four units of study.

According to the New Jersey Department of Education school report card, of the 1,218 students enrolled at the school during the 2014-2015 school year, 85.6% were Hispanic, 11.2% were Black, 1.9% were White, 0.7% were two or more races, 0.4% were Asian, and 0.2% were American Indian. The number of Hispanic students has been steadily climbing for the past several years. This change in demographics has caused many other changes in the school such as the amount of bilingual classes, English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, funding, and an increase in Spanish materials/resources. It has also caused teachers to focus on the needs of English Language Learners through professional development and planning. In past years, each grade level had at least one bilingual classroom, where students who qualified were placed. They received instruction in Spanish and English from their regular education teacher, and had the support of an ESL teacher in the classroom. This school year, many programmatic changes were made. Only kindergarten through second grade now have bilingual classrooms. This means that many students who were in bilingual classrooms last year are now in regular education classes this year. They get pulled out for ESL services during the day, but their primary instruction is in English. This caused a shift in teaching to accommodate for the needs of these learners.

Enrollment by Ethnic/Racial Subgroup

This graph presents the percentages of enrollment for each subgroup defined by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Two or More Races 0.7%
White 1.9%
Black 11.2%
American Indian 0.2%
Asian 0.4%
Hispanic 85.6%

White | Black | Hispanic
Asian | American Indian | Pacific Islander
Two or More Races
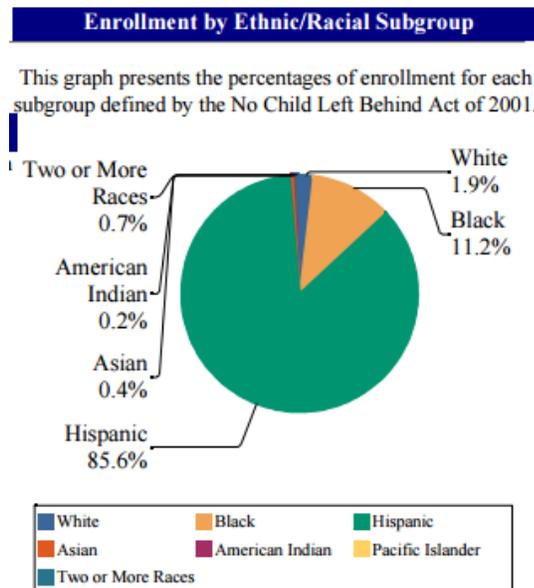
Figure 1. Enrollment by Ethnic/Racial Subgroup

The languages spoken at home included: 76.8% Spanish, 22.8% English, and 0.4% Chinese. This is relevant to the study, because the participants will be English Language Learners. It is important to understand that many of the students in the school go home to a Spanish speaking household, where one or both parents do not speak English. The students are often not receiving support at home because their parents are unable to assist them with certain assignments due to the language barrier. Availability of resources is also an issue for these students. They do not have the access to reading materials they need in order to grow as readers. All of these factors play into a decrease of independent reading for students. As discussed in chapter 1, thinking about the issues and challenges that my students are faced with, led to the development of my research question.

Language Diversity	
This table presents the percentage of students who primarily speak each language in their home.	
2014-15	**Percent**
Spanish	76.8%
English	22.8%
Chinese	0.4%

Figure 2. Language Diversity

Participants

All 22 students in my third grade class participated in this study on some level. The students learned songs and poems to perform for the class, and other audiences throughout the school. I chose the theme of America and patriotism for the song selection. I thought with this year being a national election, it would work well with my other instruction. They were also involved in practicing reader's theater scripts, and participating in reading performances to improve their fluency and overall reading achievement. There will be a "President's Day Show" in February where the students will read, sing, and act on stage for their peers, parents, teachers, and school administration.

Of the 22 students, five students served as a focus group for the study. These students were selected based on their responses to a reading motivation survey, their initial reading levels, and their qualification for ESL services. Two of the five students were Hispanic American girls whose parents are from Mexico. Three of the five students were Hispanic American boys whose parents are either from Mexico or Guatemala. They were all eight years old and in third grade. Every day, all five participants were taken out of my regular education classroom for 80 minutes of English as a Second Language

(ESL) services. The five students varied in terms of academic ability, English proficiency, behavior, personality, and levels of interest.

"Alondra" is a friendly girl who enjoys participating in all school activities. She is willing to work hard in class, and always completes her homework on time. She likes drawing and playing outside during her free time. She gets along well with her classmates. When she is interacting with them socially, she will often switch between speaking Spanish and English. At the beginning of the study, she was reading on a level M according to the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment.

"Julio" is a talkative and energetic student. He always seems excited and happy to be in school. He works hard and usually completes his homework on time. He loves soccer and playing games in his free time. He has positive interactions with his peers, and he is well-liked by the majority of his classmates. He speaks very clearly in both Spanish and English. At the beginning of the study, he was reading on a level M according to the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment.

"Danny" is a funny and entertaining boy who loves to play and tell jokes. He participates in school activities and completes homework on time. In his free time, he enjoys watching TV, playing in a band with his brothers, and playing pranks. During one of his interviews, he stated, "I like to practice reading because I don't want to be the worst reader." He is sometimes hard to understand when he speaks in English. He often has to tell a classmate what he is trying to say in Spanish first, and they will help him repeat it in English. This does not, however, deter him from communicating with his

teachers or peers. At the beginning of the study, he was reading on a level M according to the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment.

"Angel" is a shy and sometimes defiant boy. He does not like to participate in classroom activities, and often does not complete homework. In his free time, he enjoys watching TV, playing video games, and watching YouTube videos. When asked to complete assignments, he often sighs or rolls his eyes. He seems to lack enthusiasm for learning, which leads to less success in academics. Although he does not always perform well on reading assessments, he was reading on grade level in September. At the beginning of the study, he was reading on a level N according to the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment.

"Emily" is a shy and respectful girl. She gets along and works well with others. She participates in all school activities, but often seems uninterested or unenthusiastic about it. In her free time, she enjoys drawing and playing with her sister. When Emily speaks, it is sometimes difficult to understand her due to an accent. Many times when talking with her friends, she will choose to speak in Spanish. At the beginning of the study, she was reading on a level N according to the Fountas and Pinnell Assessment.

Description of Research

The research conducted in this study was qualitative and naturalistic practitioner inquiry. Qualitative research uses field notes, journals, participant's artifacts, etc. as a means of acquiring data. The researcher is the main source of information, and assumes a subjective, biased stance as a participant observer. In qualitative research the researcher listens to participants' views, asks general open questions, conducts research in a natural

setting, and takes a role in advocating for change and better lives. Practitioner inquiry refers to a non-quantitative, non-psychometric, non-positivist, and non-experimental study. It uses insider perspectives and provides others with local knowledge about the classroom/school in which the research is being conducted. It is planned, systematic, and intentional inquiry. It is not random, and has a carefully framed research question that attempts to address a clearly identified problem. There must be relevant and trustworthy data collection, and analysis and interpretation of that data. The conclusion includes implications and claims to provide knowledge and understanding to those who read the research. This research was conducted in order to learn more about my students, my classroom/school environment, and to investigate a problem I have come across when teaching. I aimed to affect and improve my own instruction in the classroom. It has been stated that teacher research is simply an extension of good teaching because teachers are looking closely at their students' needs. Through this study, I not only improved my own instruction, but also got to share my knowledge with other professionals in the field in order to affect their instruction as well. The ultimate goal was to improve literacy education for students by looking closely at a carefully developed research question.

Data Collection Tools

Data collection is an important component when conducting teacher research and there are many ways in which to do so. Surveys, questionnaires, interviews, student work, and observations are a few types of data collection teacher researchers use when gaining insight into their question (Shagoury & Power, 2012, p. 80). Data collection occurred in many different forms during this study. It was critical to look at different types of data in order to gain a broader and more complete perspective on the issue being

studied. Prior to the study taking place, the students were assessed using the Fountas and Pinnell reading leveling assessment. This assessment measures word identification (both in isolation and in context), fluency, retelling, and reading comprehension. I found the students' independent, instructional, and frustration levels of reading. This data was analyzed to determine whether the students are reading below, on, or above grade level. The students were given the same assessment at the conclusion of the study in order to see if any growth occurred, and in which areas.

Students were also given the "Elementary Reading Attitude Survey" developed by Dennis J. Kear of Wichita State University. This survey assessed: the student's level of interest toward reading, their overall attitude toward academic and recreational reading, and their motivation for reading both in and out of school. The survey is very "child friendly" in the way the questions are stated, and in the way the students answer the questions. The language is appropriate for third graders. The students rate their response by circling the picture of Garfield that best describes how they feel about the question. The survey was explained to the students prior to them answering the questions. The questions were read aloud to the students, and they were encouraged to be as honest as possible with their responses. This survey was administered again at the conclusion of the study in order to analyze and compare the students' responses.

In addition to a more formal survey with pre-determined questions, students were also interviewed periodically throughout the study. They were asked open-ended questions related to singing songs/reciting poetry, reading, writing, performing, etc. They were asked questions that allow them to explain how they feel about themselves as readers and writers. The goal of the student interviews was to hear from the students

themselves regarding the issues related to the research question being studied. Although many of the interview questions were pre-determined, any questions that arose during the interview were also asked. Finally, the students were given time to simply talk freely about their feelings related to the research topic.

The final piece of data collection took the form of a teacher researcher journal. This journal was kept to record observations about the whole class as well as the five selected participants. Direct quotations from students were recorded, along with more general observations. This data provides the reader with a peek into my classroom, and with information that cannot be gained through more formal assessments or data collection tools. By thinking deeply and recording what takes place during the study, I was able to understand more clearly what is happening with my students.

Data Analysis

The data collected over the duration of this study was used to make conclusions about the impact singing and reciting poetry has on English Language Learners' motivation to read. The analysis of data allows teachers to interpret the data, which can lead to conclusions and implications for their work. The interest survey and motivation profile provided me with a way to chart similarities and differences amongst students, as well as gauge their individual stances on reading. I was also able to determine if singing and reciting poetry had any impact on their motivation, by comparing the beginning data with the ending data.

The Fountas and Pinnell reading leveling assessment was used to measure student reading fluency as well as their overall reading achievement. Because the assessment was

given at the beginning and the end of the study, I was able to make conclusions as to whether or not singing songs and reciting poetry had an impact on the students' overall reading ability.

Interviews were analyzed by reading, listening, and thinking about the students' responses, and making implications about how that connects with my research question. This type of data is more open to interpretation by the researcher. It was combined with the other forms of data to create a more detailed picture of the results.

By keeping a teacher researcher journal, I was able to analyze student behavior and reactions to singing, reciting poetry, and reading. This provided me with information that students were unable to articulate to me during interviews and was not addressed during other methods of data collection. This type of data collection was one of the most authentic pieces of information. It allowed me to analyze my own instruction, individual and general student reactions, and other observations I may have normally missed.

Data analysis was one of the most critical aspects of this study. Without looking closely at the data that was collected, there would have been no way of drawing conclusions about the results. The goal of this research was to impact my own instruction and the instruction of others by sharing my findings. This would be impossible without a thorough data analysis component.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

This chapter is an analysis of the data that was collected in order to research the question, "What happens when songs and poetry are used to motivate English Language Learners to read in a third grade classroom." As stated in chapter three, the participants of this study were selected based on their responses to a reading motivation survey, their initial reading levels, and their qualification for ESL services. When looking at the study on a whole, the data that was collected fit into two main categories: 1. overall reading achievement, which includes an in-depth fluency analysis, and 2. motivation and attitude toward reading, which includes reactions, comments, and observations of the students regarding the study. After collecting the data during the study, I scored, interpreted, and reflected on what the data implied. I charted the information in order to organize the data, and analyze it more clearly. I saw that the data went in two directions, one that was more quantitative (overall reading achievement), and the other that was more qualitative (motivation and attitude toward reading). Both categories provided important information that can be looked at both individually and together to get a complete picture of the results. Due to the fact that this is qualitative research, there is room for the practitioner to have opinions, make assumptions, and look at the data from their point of view.

Increased Automaticity

In order to analyze the fluency data correctly, it was broken into the three components of fluency: automaticity, accuracy, and prosody. The first component

presented is automaticity. This refers to reading rate, and is determined by the number of words read per minute (WPM).

The students were tested using the Fountas and Pinnell Reading Leveling Assessment for all the components of fluency and overall reading achievement. Students were timed as they read the selected books aloud during the assessment. I made sure to be as discrete as possible when starting and stopping the timer, so as not to intimidate the student or cause them to change their reading rate because of the fact that they were being timed. The first table below shows the recommended oral reading rates according to Fountas and Pinnell for the instructional levels. All the students that were tested, fell into either the 2-3 (L-M-N) level or 3 (N-O-P) level, therefore their recommended WPM was 90-140.

Fountas & Pinnell Recommended Oral Reading Rates
(Words per Minute)

Expected oral reading rates at grade and instructional levels	
End of Grade (Level)	**Oral Reading Rate (WPM)**
1 (J-K)	75-100
2-3 (L-M-N)	90-120
3 (N-O-P)	100-140

Figure 3. Fountas and Pinnell Recommended Oral Reading Rates

The second table shown below are the results of each student at three different points during the study. The first assessment was given before the study officially began at the beginning of September. The second assessment was given about three weeks after the start of the study, at the end of October. The final assessment was given at the end of the six-week study, at the end of November.

Table 1

WPM Scores

Student	WPM (Beginning of September)	WPM (End of October)	WPM (End of November)
Alondra	76	82	97
Emily	84	97	112
Danny	90	94	100
Angel	67	73	99
Julio	104	102	105

At the beginning of September, Alondra, Emily, and Angel were scoring below the recommended WPM, meaning they were reading at a slower rate. All three of these students made gains in their reading rate after three weeks of the study was conducted. Alondra improved by 8 words per minute, Emily improved by 13 words per minute, and Angel improved by 6 words per minute. At this point, however, they were still falling below the recommended WPM for their instructional reading level. By the end of the study, all three students fell within the recommended WPM, and once again made gains in their reading rate. Alondra improved by 15 WPM, with a total gain of 21 WPM, Emily also improved by 15 WPM, with a total gain of 28 WPM, and Angel improved by 16 WPM, with a total gain of 32 WPM.

Danny started out just meeting the recommended WPM before the study began. Although he was already meeting this goal, he still made gains during the study. He improved by 4 WPM from September to October, and then 6 WPM from October to November, making his overall gain 10 WPM.

Julio started out reading at a faster reading rate than recommended to show good fluency. He would often ignore punctuation and make errors when reading due to trying

to read quickly. He demonstrated what Rasinski was fearful of, faster reading due to a testing situation, without proper fluency or comprehension. His goal was the opposite of the other students: to reduce his WPM score. From September to October his score reduced by 2 WPM, but from October to November, he improved by 3 WPM, making his overall gain 1 WPM. What you will see in the following sections however, shows that Julio made significant progress in his accuracy and prosody throughout the study.

Increased Accuracy

The next fluency component that was studied was accuracy, which is measured by correct words per minute (CWPM). This score is determined by subtracting the number of errors made from the number of words read per minute. These scores were determined by the same assessment (Fountas and Pinnell) as the WPM scores shown above.

Table 2

CWPM Scores

Student	CWPM (Beginning of September)	CWPM (End of October)	CWPM (End of November)
Alondra	73	81	97
Emily	80	95	110
Danny	90	93	98
Angel	63	72	96
Julio	95	99	105

Alondra, Emily, and Angel made gains in their WPM scores, also made significant gains in their CWPM scores. Alondra improved by 8 CWPM from September to October, and then 16 CWPM from October to November, making her overall gain 24 CWPM. She was also 100% accurate on the final assessment. Emily improved by 15

CWPM from September to October, and then 15 CWPM from October to November, making her overall gain 30 CWPM. Angel improved by 9 CWPM from September to October, then 6 CWPM from October to November, making his overall gain 15 CWPM.

Danny made small gains throughout the study, but actually started out with 100% accuracy in September and made more errors in October and November. There could be several reasons for this to occur including: the text level increased in difficulty, his number of WPM increased, and a shift in fluency focus to prosody. Having been the one to administer the test, I can report that although his accuracy technically decreased, his overall fluency increased, and it did not affect his reading comprehension or achievement.

Julio who was our fast reader, made gains in the number of CWPM. He improved by 4 CWPM from September to October, and then by 6 CWPM from October to November, making his overall gain 10 CWPM. More importantly, he went from 91% accurate in September to 100% accurate on his final assessment in November. This was a big accomplishment for Julio.

Increased Prosody

The third component of fluency is prosody which refers to oral expression when reading. This is the most subjective component to measure and score. The table below shows the scoring guide provided by the Fountas and Pinnell Assessment. I followed this guide as closely as possible when scoring the students on prosody.

Table 3

Expression Scoring Guide

Expression Score	Explanation of Score
0	Reads primarily word-by-word with occasional but infrequent or inappropriate phrasing; no smooth or expressive interpretation, irregular pausing, and no attention to author's meaning or punctuation; no stress or inappropriate stress, and slow rate.
1	Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three- and four- word groups and some word-by-word reading; almost no smooth, expressive interpretation or pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; almost no stress or inappropriate stress; with slow rate most of the time.
2	Reads primarily in three- or four- word phrase groups; some smooth, expressive interpretation and pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; mostly appropriate stress and rate with some slowdowns.
3	Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrases or word groups; mostly smooth, expressive interpretation and pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; appropriate stress and rate with only a few slowdowns.

Once again, the same assessment (Fountas and Pinnell) as given to determine the WPM and CWPM, was administered at the same times of the year to provide the scores shown in the table below. Keep in mind that the beginning of September score was determined prior to the study, the end of October score was after three weeks of the study, and the end of November score was after 6 weeks of the study.

Table 4

Expression Scores

Student	Expression Score (Beginning of September)	Expression Score (End of October)	Expression Score (End of November)
Alondra	1	2	2
Emily	0	1	2
Danny	2	2	3
Angel	1	2	3
Julio	1	2	2

Alondra, Emily, Angel, and Julio increased their prosody score by one level from September to October. Alondra, Angel and Julio all went from a 1 to a 2, and Emily went from a 0 to a 1. Danny remained the same. His score stayed at a 2 from September to October. Emily, Danny, and Angel increased their prosody score by one level from October to November. Danny and Angel went from a 2 to a 3, and Emily went from a 1 to a 2. Alondra and Julio remained at a 2 from October to November.

All of the students increased one to two levels throughout the six weeks of intervention. Although this may not seem significant, if you look closely at the scoring guide, there are major differences between each level. The students all vastly improved in their prosody and overall fluency due to singing, reciting poetry, and focusing on expression throughout the study.

Increase in Overall Reading Achievement

After looking closely at each of the three fluency components, it is important to relate that information to overall reading achievement. This is measured by looking at three factors: accuracy, fluency, and reading comprehension. The scores for each of those

areas are combined to determine an overall reading level. The reading levels are also broken into three categories: independent, instructional, and frustration. The independent reading level refers to the level of text that the student is able to accurately read and comprehend with no assistance from others. The instructional reading level refers to the level of text that the student can read and comprehend well enough for instruction to be valuable. This is the level teachers are most concerned with, because it will determine where instruction begins. The frustration reading level refers to the level of text that is too difficult for the student to read and comprehend. Instruction would not be considered valuable at this level. All of the data below refers to the students' instructional levels.

The first chart shows the instructional text level goals for grades K-3 according to Fountas and Pinnell. Looking at grade 3, students should be at M/N in the month of September, N in the month of October, and N in the month of November. They should be at an instructional level P by the end of third grade.

Fountas and Pinnell

Instructional Text Level Goals

GRADE	MONTHS OF THE SCHOOL YEAR									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
K	–	–	–	A	A/B	B	B	C	C	C
1	C/D	D	E	E/F	F	G	G/H	H	I	I
2	I/J	J	J	J/K	K	K/L	L	L	M	M
3	M/N	N	N	N	O	O	O	P	P	P

Figure 4. Fountas and Pinnell Instructional Text Level Goals

The second chart shows the students' overall instructional reading levels according to the Fountas and Pinnell Assessment during the months of September, October, and November.

Table 5

Fountas and Pinnell Scores

Student	F&P Score-Instructional Level (Beginning of September)	F&P Score-Instructional Level (End of October)	F&P Score-Instructional Level (End of November)
Alondra	M	M	N
Emily	N	O	P
Danny	M	N	O
Angel	N	O	O
Julio	M	N	O

All five of the participants in the study started out reading on grade level in September. Alondra, Danny, and Julio were reading on a level M, and Emily and Angel were reading on a level N. Emily, Danny, Angel, and Julio made one level growth from September to October, either from an M to an N or an N to an O. The students reading on a level O in October are now reading above grade level. Alondra made no growth from September to October and stayed at a level M. She is now reading below grade level for this point in the year. Alondra, Emily, Danny, and Julio made one level growth from October to November. Angel remained at a level O. By the end of the 6-week study, 3 out of 5 of the students gained two levels in overall reading. 4 out of 5 students are reading above grade level, and 1 out of 5 students is reading on grade level.

The students' growth in overall reading can be attributed to the work they did to improve their fluency through singing and reciting poetry. The gains can also be

attributed to an increase in motivation and positive attitude toward reading. That data

will be analyzed in the next section.

Varying Increases in Motivation and Attitude Toward Reading

In order to measure the participants' attitude and motivation for reading, they

were given the "Elementary Reading Attitude Survey" developed by Dennis J. Kear of

Wichita State University. This survey assessed their overall attitude toward academic and

recreational reading, and their motivation for reading both in and out of school. The

survey was explained to the students prior to them answering the questions. The

questions were read aloud to the students, and they were encouraged to be as honest as

possible with their responses. The survey was given at the beginning of the study in early

October and again at the end of the study in late November. The table below shows the

students' scores on both surveys for recreational and academic reading.

Table 6

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey Scores

Student	Recreational Reading Score (Initial)	Recreational Reading Score (Ending)	Academic Reading Score (Initial)	Academic Reading Score (Ending)
Alondra	37/40	40/40	27/40	37/40
Emily	36/40	36/40	33/40	38/40
Danny	38/40	39/40	37/40	40/40
Angel	29/40	32/40	21/40	30/40
Julio	31/40	36/40	36/40	38/40

An important result of this survey was that all of the students scored the same or

higher in attitude and motivation for both recreational and academic reading at the end of

the study compared to the beginning of the study. This shows that their motivation to read

increased due to singing and reciting poetry. When comparing recreational to academic

reading, Alondra, Emily, Danny, and Angel scored higher for recreational reading on the

initial survey. Out of those four students, two students, Emily and Danny, switched and

scored higher for academic reading on the ending survey. What they were doing in the

classroom had a positive effect on how they viewed academic reading. Although both

Alondra and Angel did not score higher for academic reading on the ending survey, they

made about a 10-point increase which also supports the assertion made above.

One specific question on the survey was, "How do you feel when you read out

loud in class?" All of the students gave this question a low score (1 or 2) on the initial

survey. On the ending survey, four out of five of the students, Alondra, Emily, Danny,

and Angel increased their rating to a score of 3 or 4. This information led me to believe

that the students' opinions about reading out loud were drastically changed by the

activities they were taking part in. Not only that, but they were all growing confidence in

themselves as readers, and were less afraid to read aloud. All in all, the survey results

clearly showed the students were more motivated and had a better attitude toward reading

as a result of participating in the study.

Students' Reactions and Thoughts

Throughout the study, observations were made in a teacher researcher journal.

This information helped to see what was happening during the study, how students were

responding, and what could be changed to benefit the students. Reading and reflecting on

the notes taken in the journal was a daily activity during this study. Informal interviews

were conducted with the students as well. These interviews aimed to find out more

information about the students' perspectives than they were naturally providing on their own.

Danny

"I like to read because I don't want to be the worst reader." –Danny

As we were completing the first reading attitude survey at the very beginning of the study, Danny said the quote above unprompted. He seemed to want to defend his reasoning for why he likes reading in school. This quote stood out to me because of what it says about Danny's motivation for reading. He doesn't read because he loves the stories, or wants to learn facts about animals, he likes to practice reading simply because he doesn't want to be the worst reader. When I asked Danny at the beginning of the study if he thinks he's a good reader, he replied, "A little bit." Based on this information, I determined that what Danny lacked most was confidence. During the remaining weeks of the study I made sure to subtly encourage and praise Danny. By the end of the six-weeks, he asked me if he could have a microphone to sing one of the songs in our show. I asked him why he thought he should have the microphone and he said, "I practiced that song so much that I know I can read it. I want everyone to know I am a better reader now." After Danny said this, I almost cried. This was exactly what I was hoping for when I started this study. Danny's outlook on himself as a reader was changed by singing songs during reading instruction.

Emily

"It's hard for me to make my voice sound good because I don't know the words." –Emily

Emily made this statement to me during guided reading. The fact that she said this told me she understood that we were working on fluency and knew that meant her voice had to sound a certain way. I considered this an accomplishment. We discussed the strategy of repeated readings, and that she could practice the words over and over again until her voice "sounds good." I told her it was like when we practiced the songs. She seemed satisfied with this and started practicing the text again.

"Singing is not the same as reading because it has music." –Emily

In an informal interview with Emily, she said the quote above. I realized I could take this statement one of two ways. The negative way to interpret her response is that she is not grasping the connection I am trying to make between reading and singing. Because of that, she won't apply the skills and words she is learning through song to other types of literature. The more positive way of looking at it is, since she considers reading a struggle, she will be unintentionally reading when she sings and become a better reader. After a day or two, I probed her further asking, "Do you like singing more than reading?" She replied, "Yes, because I can learn the words faster." This is another valuable piece of information. This particular English Language Learner feels it is easier to learn the words when they are put to music, even when in both cases she is reading the words on paper.

Julio

"I like to sing in the classroom, but not on a stage." –Julio

Julio said this to another boy in the classroom after we finished singing a song during week 4 of the study. The students knew we were practicing songs to sing in a show. Later I asked him, "Why do you like singing in the classroom?" He said, "Because

they are all my friends." This caused me to realize how important it is to make my classroom environment one where students feel comfortable to make mistakes, try, fail, and experience success. Although it hadn't been my focus during the study, I created a community of students who were all in this "singing adventure" together. Julio enjoyed singing in the classroom where his friends were also singing along with him. He felt as though he belonged and he was a part of something. What is more motivating than that?

Alondra

"I used to get nervous kids will make fun of me when I read out loud, but now I like it."
–Alondra

Alondra said this to me during an informal interview in the cafeteria. She was referring to a poetry slam we just finished, where she read her poem for the class. We continued the conversation and she revealed that she didn't think she could speak English well enough when she read. I asked her why she liked to read out loud now. She told me because the poems are fun to read and when she practices she can, "sound like the good readers in English." This was another almost crying in the cafeteria moment for me. Poetry was the type of literature that Alondra found a connection with. She liked to read it, wanted to practice it, and was motivated to read it aloud. When I observed her singing, she participated but never seemed enthusiastic about it. This caused me to realize I chose to look at songs and poetry during this study, but not all students will find that connection and motivation to the same types of text. It is important for teachers to help students find what works best for them and allow them to use that to their advantage as much as possible.

Angel

"I like this song!" –Angel

Angel was the least motivated reader in the study and my class in general. He never seemed to want to do anything I tried. He wasn't defiant and participated for the most part, but was never excited about it. When I first introduced the idea of singing songs, he would roll his eyes and sigh. When we would perform the songs, he would put his song sheet in front of his face so that I couldn't see whether he was singing or not. I didn't yell or draw attention to any of these behaviors. I simply let him have his own reactions to whatever we did in class. During week 3 of the study I introduced the song, "You're a Grand Old Flag." After hearing it for the first time, Angel shouted out the quote above. I was honestly shocked, but tried not to show it. I said, "That's great Angel. Sometimes we like some songs and not others the same way we like some books and not others." I tried to use it as a teachable moment.

"Can I read my poem again?" –Angel

This question was asked after our first poetry slam. When he read his poem for the class, he was very quiet and didn't seem to want to read. He moved his body from side to side and barely faced the audience. Afterward he came up to me and asked to read his poem again. I asked why he wanted to go again and he said, "I think I can read better." Although Angel was much more reluctant than the other students and still is, I can see changes occurring in him. He is slowly shedding the "I don't like or care about anything" exterior he started with, and is coming around. In a different way, he might end up being my biggest success.

Summary

After closely analyzing the data that was collected during the study, several assertions can be made. The students' reading fluency, overall reading achievement, and motivation for reading were positively affected by singing and reciting poetry as part of their daily reading instruction. The students varied in many factors including how much progress they made, but all student showed some amount of growth. Chapter 5 will look to summarize the information further, and present conclusions to the study.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Limitations, and Implications

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to find out more about the potential of songs and poetry for motivating English Language Learners to read. In order to learn about this broad topic, research was conducted to answer the following question, "What happens when songs and poetry are used to motivate English Language Learners to read in a third grade classroom?" This question was carefully chosen by the teacher researcher based on the student population and student needs. After completing the study, many conclusions can be drawn based on the data that was collected. The participants of the study all showed growth in the areas of: motivation, reading fluency, and overall reading achievement. Their success was due to singing daily and reciting poetry as a part of their literacy instruction. The students shared their different perspectives on learning to read, and gave positive feedback regarding singing and reciting poetry. The students also showed an enthusiasm and excitement for reading that was not common, especially amongst English Language Learners. Choosing the right texts which included song lyrics and poetry, allowed for a way to break through the language barrier and bring the joy back into learning to read.

From the study's findings, it was clear that once the students were motivated to read, they naturally read more. Because they did not feel like they were struggling through reading a book, they willingly and happily practiced reading in a way they enjoyed. Practicing reading through different types of texts caused them to become more fluent readers. Better reading fluency led to better reading comprehension, which led to

an increase in overall reading achievement. Once the students had the confidence to read, that translated into wanting to read not only song lyrics and poems, but books, reader's theater scripts, online texts, etc. The results of this study mirrored the results of studies done by: Rasinski, Kuhn, Stahl, Samuels, and others. Looking specifically at themes such as, motivation and English Language Learners, was one way to add to the body of research we currently have on this topic. Although we have a significant amount of data surrounding topics such as: motivation, reading fluency, and English Language Learners, there are still limitations to what we know and how we know it.

Limitations

As with any research, especially research that is qualitative in nature, there are limitations that may affect the results of the study. The participants in this research study consisted of a small group of five students. With a group size that small, it is not possible to make conclusions that can be generalized, and are true for all students. Because all students, schools, and communities are unique, the results of this study may not apply to a different group of students, in different locations, with different educational backgrounds. The size of the group is not the only factor that may limit the conclusions. The participants of the study were categorized as English Language Learners, which can have a variety of meanings. Their primary language was Spanish, and they have all received bilingual instruction prior to being a part of the research study. They are third graders, and were all reading on grade level at the start of the study. This may not be the case for other English Language Learners, therefore those differences make it difficult to compare the results.

Along with the specific group of students being studied, the time span also limits the generalization of the conclusions. The study took place over a six-week period of time. Because of the short duration, it is unknown what the long term effects of the research will be. Assumptions can be made, but all they will be are strong opinions without the proper data to support them. If this study was extended to a larger group of participants, lasting a longer period of time, more data could be collected and analyzed. This would allow for more generalized conclusions to be made.

Another limitation has to do with the flexibility of the curriculum at the study's location. The school in which the study took place, follows the Model Curriculum, which allows for a large amount of flexibility in the materials and resources being used, how instructional time is spent, and how students are assessed. The teacher researcher had the freedom to choose song lyrics and poems as the instructional materials used to teach literacy, and to spend time singing and reciting poetry as part of the students' literacy instruction. Many school districts require teachers to follow strict curriculum and pacing guides, use only district approved materials and resources, and expect teachers to be teaching specific lessons at specific times during the day. This type of rigid scheduling and use of resources, may not allow for teachers to incorporate the strategies discussed in this study.

In spite of the study's limitations, valuable data was collected and analyzed, and valid conclusions were made. Good teachers and teacher researchers will be able to use the information presented in the study, and apply it to their own instruction despite differences such as: grade level, student background, and district mandates. In addition to the conclusions previously discussed, implications for further research is another

important component of teacher research, and the never ending search for what is best for our students.

Implications

This study found performing to be a powerful motivator for students. What singing songs and reciting poetry had in common was the performance quality they allowed for. Students began each day singing songs together while the lyrics were projected on a screen for them to read. They then performed those songs for other classrooms around the school after days of rehearsal. They are currently preparing for a culminating show that will take place in February in front of students, faculty, parents, and members of the community. The students also participated in poetry slams complete with low lighting and finger snapping applause after each performance. They watched videos of other students performing on stage and reciting their renditions of poems. All of this was done in order to excite the students and motivate them to read. They wanted to perform as best as they could, therefore practice was required. Adding reading materials that allowed for performance was proven effective for this group of students.

The students were introduced to the concept of collaboration during this study as well. The students worked together with their classmates, as well as with another classroom of students. Both classes will be performing in the show side by side as a whole group. This "all for one" mentality added a sense of belonging and unity, that fostered motivation for reading. The students were less afraid to sing, recite poetry, and read aloud when they were doing it as a group. They also became less afraid to read individually as they saw each of their classmates go before them. Students made comments that they used to be embarrassed or scared to read aloud, and now they enjoy

it. Reading aloud may not always be the literacy goal for students, but it provided them with more and more opportunities to read which is always a goal of effective literacy instruction.

When reflecting back on the study, questions arose that could be considered for the focus of future research. Some examples include, "How do you help students make the transition from fluent oral reading to silent reading?", "How can using songs and poetry be applied to the upper grade levels where more advanced reading skills are required?", and finally, "Would singing and reciting poetry be considered effective strategies for English Language Learners whose primary language is one other than Spanish?" This research study has helped to open my eyes to different possibilities for literacy instruction. My hope is that it will enlighten others and inspire more research to be conducted. According to Kofi Annan, "Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family."

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