

The Effects of L2 Storybook Reading and Interactive Vocabulary Instruction on Vocabulary Acquisition

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Abstract : Vocabulary development is positively associated with reading development, reading comprehension, and academic achievement. It is frequently stated that South Africa is in the midst of a literacy crisis. The past 24 years since the first democratically elected government have not revolutionised the education system; rather, after various curriculum changes and continued struggles to incorporate all 11 official languages as languages of instruction, research shows that 78 per cent of South African Grade 4 learners are functionally illiterate. The study sets out to find solutions to this problem and to add to the research base on vocabulary acquisition by assessing the effect of integrating the principles of explicit, interactive vocabulary instruction, within the context of storybook reading, on Grade 1 vocabulary acquisition. Participants comprised of 69 Grade 1 English second language learners from three classes in two government primary schools. The two schools differ in socio-economic status (SES), with School A having a lower SES than School B. One Grade 1 class was randomly assigned to be the Experimental Group, while two other classes served as control groups. The intervention took place for a period of 18 weeks and consisted of 30-minute storybook reading sessions, accompanied by interactive vocabulary instruction, twice a week. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test IV (PPVT-IV) was the diagnostic test administered to all learners before the intervention, as a pre-test, and after the interventions as a post-test. Data regarding excising vocabulary instruction practices and approaches were also collected through classroom observations and individual, semi-structured interviews with the Experimental Group's teacher. Findings suggest that second language storybook reading, accompanied by explicit, interactive vocabulary instruction, have a positive impact on Grade 1 vocabulary acquisition but that vocabulary teaching practices and socio-economic status also play a key role in vocabulary acquisition.

Keywords : interactive vocabulary instruction, second language vocabulary, storybook reading, vocabulary acquisition, reading development, PPVT

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