Teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum improves reading comprehension

Linda Carol Cox

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TEACHING VOCABULARY THROUGH INTEGRATED CURRICULUM IMPROVES READING COMPREHENSION

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education:
Reading/Language Arts

by
Linda Carol Cox
June 2005
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IMPROVES READING COMPREHENSION

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Approved by:

Dr. Diane Brantley, First Reader

Dr. Alayne Sullivan, Second Reader
ABSTRACT

Reading, the essential element in education, unlocks the future for all children. It helps a child gain a sense of the world and his/her place in it, and provides a child with the skills needed to succeed in school. When a child can’t read, he/she stands to miss out on a rich, satisfying adult life.

Children that don’t read well by the end of the fourth grade will continually lose ground as they continue through school, creating a wide gap that will affect them for the rest of their life. Academic success is contingent on the ability to read well both in and out of school. A lack of reading proficiency can cause adult vocational success to be severely limited.

This investigation was designed to determine if teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum would provide students who are poor readers, with strategies to improve their reading comprehension. It involved teaching cross-over vocabulary from two content areas, i.e., English and social studies.

The vocabulary strategies used in this investigation were integrated so that struggling readers and English language development students would learn how to connect denotative and connotative meanings of words found in the
novel, *Animal Farm*, to the social studies class content. Moreover, strategies resulting from integrated vocabulary improved their reading comprehension.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. Diane Brantley and Dr. Alayne Sullivan for the many hours they spent reading my thesis and for all the suggestions and help they offered. Without their help and support, this thesis would not have been completed. I also wish to thank my husband Jim, and my son Kevin, for putting up with me when I got grouchy and their unending support through it all.
DEDICATION

To Jim and Kevin
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CHAPTER ONE

STRUGGLING READERS AND POOR VOCABULARY

Many high school students struggle because they can't read proficiently. Not only do they struggle to understand what they have read, but they tend to score at or below "basic skills" level on district benchmarks and state achievement tests. Oftentimes, there is no intervention for these students that enables them to improve their vocabulary and reading comprehension. This investigation into the use of integrated curriculum to teach vocabulary and reading comprehension in one high school English class was an attempt to help students develop strategies to improve their vocabulary and reading comprehension. The investigation focused on the entire class population with particular attention given to students who failed to comprehend what they read and to those students classified as English language learners.

Reading is the essential element in education that unlocks the future for all children. Not only does reading help a child gain a sense of the world and his/her place in it, but it also provides a child with the skills needed to master the curriculum through school. Reading is the foundation for a child's life, from the time they enter
kindergarten until they retire at the age of 65. Technology has changed the world forever and students who can’t read can no longer make a life for themselves and their families. Researchers state that children must know how to read by the fourth grade or they will continually fall behind throughout the rest of their academic life. 

Clinton (2002), quoted President Bush as saying in the introduction to his early-childhood initiative in education that “reading is the foundation for all learning...that foundation is built early by exposing young children to the wonders of books and the uses of language. Reading to a child early and often can change a child’s life” (¶ 8). The child who cannot read well in the early grades will continually lose ground as he/she progresses through school, creating a wide gap that will affect them for the rest of their life. 

Academic success rests on a child’s ability to read both in and out of school, and without reading proficiency, adult vocational success can be severely limited. “Large portions of these -at-risk” ultimately become ‘adults-at-risk’ with basic educational deficiencies” (California State Plan for Adult Basic Education, 1995, ¶ 8). When children are struggling readers and lack appropriate reading and vocabulary
strategies in the early grades, they miss the foundational knowledge needed for the higher grades. The undeniable fact is that reading skills serve as the major foundational skills for all academic work and when children can’t read, they are left behind in school and in the market place after high school. Clinton (2002) also said all children born in the twenty-first century must graduate from high school with reading/writing skills that far surpass those needed by any previous generation and with technological advances taking place daily, the need for excellent reading and writing skills is going to continue to put pressure on students as they enter the work force. For example, Clinton states:

Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history...They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. (¶. 34)

Thus, struggling readers fall further behind their peers in school and many of these youngsters become at risk of dropping out before they complete four years of high
school. Wren (2001) states that the "Matthew Effect" (the rich get richer and the poor get poorer) suggests that "some students rapidly develop and build on strong literacy foundations, and other students languish behind their more fortunate peers" (¶ 2). In effect, these students that languish behind their peers, fail to become proficient readers at an early age, will struggle the rest of their lives because poor reading skills will lock them out of higher paying jobs. The research shows poor readers oftentimes are a burden to society in terms of the public welfare system, health care for the poor and law enforcement. Barr and Parrett said that:

There is a direct relationship between reading problems and the high cost of health and welfare, police enforcement and correction [...] reading problems have been identified in large numbers of juvenile delinquents, unemployed, incarcerated adults and men and women on welfare. (¶ 15)

Simply stated, poor readers will continually lose ground while those who quickly develop efficient reading skills gain much more academically than the struggling readers.

The High School Dropout Prevention Report (2003), released by the Ad Council, shows that over 130 students drop out of school every day. These statistics serve as a
reminder of the problems dropouts face as they mature. The research also shows that thirty percent of Hispanic youths dropout out before completing four years of school as does fourteen percent of African American youths and eight percent of Caucasian youths. Moreover, among all high school dropouts, forty-two percent earn less in the market place than their peers who graduate and forty-one to forty-six percent of all prisoners nationwide, are also high school dropouts. Finally, fifty percent of all dropouts are unemployed and are three times as likely to face poverty and receive public assistance than are high school graduates. Obviously, poor reading is not the only motivating factor for dropping out of high school. However, poor reading skills can play a significant role in part of the dropout cycle in the face of poor grades and poor test scores. Students who already have difficulties outside of school often times give up on school and themselves when they can’t keep up with their peers. Many struggling readers who drop out, cannot read grade level texts and more than likely read at least two years below grade level, if not more. In the Report to the Legislature on Reading Education in Idaho (1997), the research committee stated “that when children cannot read, they cannot do homework. They fail courses and become
discipline problems and eventually leave school early and their problems continue long after they leave school" (p. 13). According to some research, children who continually fail to develop proficient reading skills by the time they exit high school will no longer be able to secure employment that provides a comfortable living for a family as others did decades ago. The rapidly changing technological world of the twenty-first century will continually demand more proficient reading skills from the work force.

The basic intent of this investigation was to determine if teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum would be an effective strategy which will help students improve their vocabulary and reading comprehension. For the purposes of this investigation, integrated curriculum refers to the teaching of vocabulary words found in both the language arts and social studies curriculum from both perspectives, thereby giving students a broader sense of the meaning of the words instead of a specialized definition of each.

The research on integrated curriculum, poor/weak reading skills, and vocabulary development were reviewed because there seems to be a strong link between poor reading comprehension and poor vocabulary. The research
seems to suggest there is a need to teach vocabulary at all grade levels and in all content areas if students are to make significant gains in both their academic life and on achievement tests. Furthermore, the literature also indicates that students in integrated classrooms do as well or better than their peers who are in content-restricted classes. Vars and Beane found that:

...recent analysis of studies...point to the same general conclusion: Almost without exception, students in any type of interdisciplinary or integrative curriculum do as well as of often better than, students in a conventional departmentalized program. (Vars & Beane, 2000, ¶ 13)

This research suggests that teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum may very well have a significant impact on reading comprehension and vocabulary skills for struggling readers and ELD students.

Vocabulary: A Key Component of Reading

Phonics instruction provides young children with the necessary skills needed to decode words. That is, young readers learn not only sight recognition of letters, but also sound recognition of letters and syllables which are then combined into patterns to form words and words are
put into sentences. Murray (2004) states that children gain reliable access in the "alphabetic phase" when they learn to decode words from spelling alone. "Alphabetic phase reading allows children to rapidly acquire sight vocabulary" (¶. 6). Sight vocabulary provides the foundation for all later vocabulary development. Most of the research supports the link between vocabulary development and success in reading. Vocabulary is one of the major components that determines whether a child becomes a proficient reader or not. Poor vocabulary affects reading comprehension and writing skills. Thus, when a child fails to develop proficient vocabulary skills, he will lag behind his peers through the school years if no intervention is put in place. Dr. Slavin (1997) suggests children in the third grade who read below grade level or have been retained at least once and come from poor homes to attend schools serving poor children have little chance of graduating high school (What the Research Shows, ¶. 10). When a child fails to develop vocabulary skills early, adequate reading skills needed in the classroom suffer. This becomes more serious as the child moves up through the grades and enters high school. If a child is to succeed in high school, then adequate vocabulary skills, i.e., the ability to decode words and
determine meaning from context, must already be in place when the he enters high school.

When children fail to determine meanings of words, they cannot read proficiently. This problem not only affects their success in language arts, but in all curricular areas. Struggling readers are on a downward spiral that can become a way of life if they receive no reading intervention. Struggling readers will continue to fall behind their peers and will eventually give up on themselves and on school. Every day young men and women leave school without a diploma and they give up on themselves because they seemingly fail at school. "Each day, thousands of young men and women give up on their high school education, and on themselves" (The Ad Council: High School Dropout Prevention, 2003, ¶. 1). Many children in California schools and in schools across the nation, struggle all the way through school because they don’t read well enough to keep up with the reading demands placed on them in each content area. These young people constantly try to catch up, only to find themselves farther behind. Steed (1994), says that:

More than fifteen percent of our kids struggle in school because they don’t read well. If you don’t read well, you will remain behind all the way through
school. It’s like seeing that bus go over the hill and you’re running to catch up...If you can’t read, you can’t do science and you can’t do social studies and so many other things. If you can’t read or write, if you’re not literate, you can’t be come all that you could become. (EPS, ¶. 4)

Illiteracy is like a disease that cripples the body, it cripples an individual’s chance to be all that he can be.

Often times, English language learners, like struggling readers, fall behind in academic classes because they lack the vocabulary skills to keep up with the reading in high school. Their academic problems are compounded because their inability to read specialized texts interferes with their ability to complete homework assignments. Thus, many ELD students fail to pass their core classes. These ELD students are expected to learn to speak, read, and write in English while also mastering the content in core classes in order to pass state mandated achievement tests as well as well as local district benchmarks.

Comprehension: Making Sense of Words

The Council for Learning Disabilities (2004) states that the relationship between vocabulary development and
reading comprehension is extremely important for struggling readers in high school because students must be able to understand the meanings of words quickly as they read in order to promote reading comprehension. Thus, if a student is to make sense of the curriculum and what they read, they must have a foundation of skills and strategies to learn vocabulary. Students who lack these foundational skills will remain struggling readers because they fail to come to high school with the vocabulary knowledge that is a prerequisite to their understanding of the content-area curriculum.

Proficient reading depends on a child’s ability to make sense of words. If a child lacks decoding skills and appropriate strategies to determine word meanings in context, comprehension does not occur. Blachowitz and Fisher found there is a strong connection between the vocabulary knowledge of readers and their ability to understand what they read (2003, ¶ 1). A child must have appropriate strategies in his/her repertoire of skills to determine the meanings of words (in context) in order to build on prior knowledge. The child who is unable to comprehend text because he/she is unable to determine meanings of unfamiliar words, will also struggle to respond in writing to literature. This breaks down into a
pattern of continual poor performance as a child progresses through the grades in all academic areas. It will continue to affect a child’s life as he/she leaves school to move into adult life and the work force. The research concerning the lasting effects of poor reading on children as they grow up shows that as late as 1998, 70% of all prisoners in the U.S. score in the two lowest levels of reading proficiency. Over 20% of all adults read at or below the fifth grade level. This means that in the current job market, where an individual must be able to read at least at the ninth grade level, many adults are unable to earn a living wage. Furthermore, the adult illiteracy rate in the United States is almost 39% and of that, 26.1 percent of all males are considered illiterate and 50.0% of all females are also illiterate (National Institute for Literacy, Literary Statistics, 1998, ¶. 1-7). These statistics demonstrate the magnitude of the problem poor readers face after high school and how illiteracy affects their ability to earn a living with an end result of their becoming a burden on society as well.

Even though some research suggests that children can become adequate readers without studying vocabulary, the statistics (above) show that many more American children are at risk of failing to achieve the minimum basic skills
that separate them from literacy and illiteracy which in turn affects them for the rest of their lives. Many struggling readers in local California high schools fail to develop adequate reading skills because they lack the vocabulary skills needed to ensure good comprehension. The question considered in this study was, "would teaching integrated vocabulary to poor readers and ELD students provide them with reading/vocabulary skills that would impact reading comprehension/test scores?"

Vocabulary and Reading Deficiencies: The Causes

There are different reasons as to why children struggle to learn to read and acquire new vocabulary so they can keep up with grade level texts as they progress through school. According to U.S. English, Inc. (2003), "...in 1990 the Bureau of the Census had reported for the first time...the existence of a significant number of native-born Americans over the age of five who did not speak English very well" (¶. 1) (see Table 1).
Table 1. United States Residents Aged 5 and Older (Millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>% Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Population</strong></td>
<td>230.5</td>
<td>262.4</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks Language Other Than English</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks English “Less than very well”</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Native Born</strong></td>
<td>210.7</td>
<td>231.7</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks Language Other Than English</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks English “Less than very well”</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign Born</strong></td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Speaks Language Other Than English</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks English “Less than very well”</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(U.S. English, Inc., 2003, ¶ 1)

Children who are native English speakers sometimes become struggling readers for various reasons but they are not alone. Non-native English speakers also have difficulties with vocabulary and reading comprehension. Between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of small children born in the U.S., whose native language is something other than English, enter school for the first time and must learn to speak a new language, as well as how to read and write in English also. This means that while they are learning the mechanics of English, such as the alphabet
and the sounds of letters, they must also learn new vocabulary words in order to read unfamiliar text. The task of learning to speak a new language while also learning to read and write in it is even more difficult when parents speak little or no English at home. Thus, many children find reading and learning new vocabulary to be a monumental task and they struggle to keep up with their peers.

**English Language Learners Struggle Also**

Students who’s native language is English are not the only children entering school for the first time who struggle to read. Students entering American schools who are non-native English speakers need time to master both conversational English and the academic English found in textbooks. Since academic English is often far more difficult because of specialized vocabulary, many students struggling to learn English need intervention strategies to help their bilingual academic development. The problem of learning to speak English while learning to read and write in academic English is also shown in Hurley’s (2001) research. She states:

> The difference in length of time typically required for students to attain peer-appropriate levels in
conversational versus academic verbal skills suggests that both ESL and regular classroom instruction should focus not only on developing students’ conversational fluency in English but also on their academic proficiency in language. (p. 124)

A major problem facing non-English speaking students in local California high schools is their inability to reach proficiency in academic language quick enough to master grade level content. Many students fail to gain enough English proficiency to meet the rigorous requirements in core classes as well as pass the benchmark tests and achievement tests.

The California State Plan for Adult Basic Education (1992) for the period from June 30, 1992, to July 1, 1995, suggests that while the California population is on par with the national average, the Hispanic population was not keeping up with the rest of the state. A study done by SRA Associates (1987) shows "15% or 3.1 million of California’s 20 million population over age 14 had significant literacy performance deficiencies during 1987 (California State Plan for Adult Basic Education, 1987, p. 3). Table 2 shows the gap between ethnic populations within the state in literacy performance. These statistics suggest the Hispanic population within California schools
are not receiving enough intensive intervention that will help them overcome the language barriers (see Table 2).

**Table 2. California Populations Over Age 14 With Significant Literacy Deficits by Ethnic-Racial Category, Estimates for 1987**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic-Racial Group:</th>
<th>Total Population Over 14:</th>
<th>Number with Literacy Deficit:</th>
<th>Percent with Literacy Deficit:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>13,545,153</td>
<td>1,327,425</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3,724,355</td>
<td>890,121</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1,484,592</td>
<td>393,413</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total State</td>
<td>20,400,728</td>
<td>3,075,308</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Dixon, Vargo, & Campbell, as cited in California State Plan for Adult Basic Education, 1987, Exhibit 5)

These statistics suggest all California school districts must find ways to reduce the literacy deficit in order to meet government mandates for standardized test scores. But more importantly, they must find interventions that will reduce the literacy deficit among ethnic-racial groups so that when students graduate from high school, they are better equipped to secure employment and/or enter a university/community college. Teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum may be an appropriate strategy that will provide students with the skills to determine meaning of words in context while also adding to their vocabulary repertoire.
Local School District: Recurring Problems

The recurring problem in one particular California school district with a high proportion of Hispanic students is that of poor reading comprehension which affects every area of the curriculum. For example, of the total number of students enrolled (639) in Sophomore English at Freedom High School in Newborg, California, 624 sophomores took the California Standards English Language Arts tests in the Spring of 2003. Of the 624 who took the test, 24 or 4% of the students scored at the “advanced” level, 107 or 17% scored at the “proficient” level, 206 or 33% scored at the “basic” skills level while 180 or 29% scored at the “below basic” level, and finally, 107 or 17% scored at the “far below basic” level. The combined scores of below basic and far below basic equaled 46% of the total students tested. The largest percent fell into the “basic” skills with a 33%. It is obvious from these scores that students just in the Sophomore class at this school need some form of vocabulary/reading intervention if they are to be prepared for college in 2 more years. With these statistics in mind, this study was designed to determine if teaching vocabulary through an integrated curriculum format would provide students with appropriate vocabulary strategies to improve their reading comprehension.
Many of the students at this local high school are second language learners who are required to pass the CELDT Test (California English Language Development Test), before being able to exit the ELL program. This means that this population is working on both oral language mastery at the same time they are trying to master content in their second language. The Hispanic population is the largest minority population at Freedom High School. What teachers have found in the English classes is that many of these Hispanic students can decode words but fail to derive meaning from the text. One of the major areas of concern for these struggling students then is the academic vocabulary found in literature and other textbooks across all content areas. While decoding new or unfamiliar words is necessary for success in reading, it is inadequate because it does not provide reading comprehension. Students must also be able to determine meaning within the context or more simply stated, make sense of what they are reading. This equally applies to content areas such as mathematics, science, and social studies.

All struggling readers, not just ELD students, who cannot derive meaning from text because of poor vocabulary, are severely limited in their ability to write. When students lack the strategies to use academic
vocabulary in their writing, they are severely limited in their written responses to literature in the English classroom. It is reasonable to assume that if no vocabulary/reading/writing interventions take place for many of these students by the age of 14, they will continue to lose academic ground as they move into high school. Research shows that just in California, the percentage of people over the age of fourteen is a staggering 15% and will continue to rise, especially among ethnic groups if children do not receive reading/vocabulary interventions before they leave school. "A study conducted by SRA (1992) estimated that 15 percent of 3.1 million of California’s 20 million population over age 14 had significant literacy performance deficiencies..." (California Plan for Adult Basic Education, 1995, ¶ 6). According to this study, the percentages of persons with literacy deficits in California’s various ethnic groups in 1987 and being projected up through 2020 is as follows:

9.8 % of the total white population, age 14 and up had a literacy deficit; 23.9 % of the Hispanic population, age 14 and up had a literacy deficit; among the Asian and Other populations, ages 14 and up, 28.2 % had literacy deficits; the Black
population of the same age, 14 and above, had a 26.5% with literacy deficits. (Exhibit 5)
The literacy deficits for these same populations are estimated to rise to 4.2 million persons of this same age group in 2000 and increase again to 5.8 million by the year 2020 just in California (California Plan for Adult Basic Education, 1992-1995, ¶7). These statistics, as found in the California Plan indicate that early intervention (reading/writing), before the age of 14 must take place if students are to succeed academically and if the drop-out rate among high school teens is to be reduced significantly. Local California high schools see a large percentage of dropouts leaving because they can’t keep up with the demands of the various core classes because of the difficult reading material found in the textbooks. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2003),

More than three thousand students drop out of high school every school day. One of the most commonly cited reasons for this is that students simply do not have the literacy skills to keep up with the high school curriculum, which has become increasingly complex. (¶ 1)

Illiteracy is a significant problem at Freedom High School in California. This study was done in an effort to find an
intervention to help struggling readers and ELD students improve their vocabulary skills as well as their reading comprehension.

All too often, struggling students will not attempt to succeed and many drop out long before finishing high school. Even though ELD students struggle to learn vocabulary in English as they attempt to master the curriculum, there may also be another problem those who drop out struggle with. In fact, there may be a deeper cause for students to give up on school and themselves than just a lack of literacy skills needed for success. The research suggests that their overall illiteracy, or inability to learn vocabulary necessary for reading comprehension is tied to a problem known as “academic disidentification.” Some students refuse to identify with academics because the content is delivered in a way that is not recognizable within their cultural framework. While disidentification had no particular bearing on this study, the research did provide another possible reason why struggling readers who are also minority students and/or English language learners fail to achieve academic success.

Osborne (1997) wrote that “Success in school appears to be related to identification with academics” (¶ 1).
Osborne, as well as other researchers found that African-Americans tended to have a higher rate of relatively poor academic outcomes because the system of schooling they experienced caused them to disidentify with academics. Minority students may disidentify with academics, meaning they find that “good performance is not rewarding and poor performance is not punishing” (¶ 1). Osborne (1997) suggested that those students who are more identified with academics should be more motivated to succeed and these students should find that good performance and its inherit rewards seems to have a bearing on their self-esteem. However, he also stated that since some groups have disidentified with academics because of race and found that there is neither reward nor punishment for good/poor academic performance, they tend “to be at a higher risk for literacy problems” (¶ 1). This study was limited to one sophomore class (35 students) comprised of white, Hispanic, and African-Americans, making it relevant to look at disidentification as a possible contributing factor to some students’ overall vocabulary/reading problems.
Hispanic Dropout Rates

Hispanic students, whether born in the United States or elsewhere, seem to face greater obstacles in American high schools than do other cultural groups. Many come from homes where education is not as important as earning money and schools and school officials are not trusted.

Among the varying ethnic populations in California high schools, Hispanic males and females drop out at a higher rate than do other ethnic groups within the same schools. Even though there has been much research done concerning keeping young students in school until they receive a diploma, the Hispanic population in California continues to have significantly higher dropout rates than do other ethnic groups in the state. "Hispanic dropout rates have remained between 30% and 35% over the past 25 years, and is 2.5 times the rate for blacks and almost 4 times the rate for white, non-Hispanics" (Hispanic CREO, 2002, ¶ 2). Large numbers of Latino children living in the United States live in poverty and will continue to do so as adults because they fail to get the education that will help them break out of that cycle. Valladares (2003), states that:

Almost one in five children under the age of five in the United States is Latino one in three of those
Latinos lives under the poverty line. Teachers, experts and community leaders agree that it is almost impossible for Latino children to break the cycle of poverty unless their education starts at a very early age. If it does not, they are already at risk of dropping out of school and destined for a life of low-paying menial jobs. (¶ 3)

Valladares’ findings suggest that the problems facing California schools and schools across the country concerning the illiteracy among ethnic populations, especially the Hispanic population, continues to grow at an alarming rate. Schools continue to face pressure from the government to raise test scores and this pressure, added to the problems of illiteracy and dropout rates seems insurmountable.

Hispanic children are the largest immigrant group in American schools and oftentimes these children must attend schools that service very poor families. Many of these children will not finish high school because they are illiterate and can’t keep up. van Hook and Balistreri (2003) suggest that:

Hispanics in California present a clear example of what happens to Latino children all across the country. Because they are the largest immigrant group
and tend to be poor and to be residentially segregated...it is nearly impossible for school districts in Hispanic areas not to be mostly poor, mostly minority, and mostly non-English-speaking. (¶. 3)

Statistics show that many Hispanic students give up on school early in their high school careers and opt to go to work at some menial job that puts money in their pockets. This move takes the pressure off of them to perform well in academics and on standardized tests. Hispanic teens, both male and female, have some of the highest dropout rates of any other ethnic group in the country. According to Valladares (2003):

Many Hispanic children are not learning to read and write. Almost half do not graduate from high school or are below grade level...the lack of education condemns people to a life of menial jobs and poverty. It can also sentence them to a life of welfare, unemployment, or crime. (¶. 1)

The number of Hispanic students who drop out of high school is staggering. While many Hispanic teens cite other reasons for dropping out of school, one recurring reason is a lack of success in school. The statistics reveal that:
Thirty-seven percent of Hispanics do not finish high school, compared to 15% of the national average. The percentage of Hispanic teens who drop out of high school is and has been higher than that of African Americans and Caucasians each and every year for the last three decades. (hispanicmagazine.com, 2002, ¶. 3)

These statistics clearly show that the phenomenon of school drop-out rates among the Hispanic population is alarming. It is essential to find ways to decrease the dropout rates for second language learners. Perhaps integrated curriculum, i.e., teaching content from two subject areas together to provide students a greater opportunity to understand relationships/connections between the curriculum and the world, is part of the answer to this dilemma. There are other programs besides integrated curriculum that might help students improve vocabulary skills and reading comprehension, i.e., small learning communities in which teachers collaborate together to help struggling students improve their academic success by closing the gap between the literacy skills students have and the literacy skills they lack.
The Study: Teaching Vocabulary Through Integrated Curriculum

The focus of this study was to determine whether using integrated curriculum, i.e., teaching vocabulary found in both a novel read in sophomore English and in the sophomore social studies class from both perspectives, would, a. help students improve reading comprehension, b. improve academic vocabulary, c. teach students how to transfer the major concepts and themes from one content area to the other.

Kathy Lake (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory), researched integrated curriculum for SIRS (School Improvement Research Series) in an attempt to determine whether or not integrated curriculum would improve schools across the country. She found, after an extensive review of multiple studies on integrated curriculum that all researchers agree that students learn as well or better than their peers in subject-restricted classes in high schools. Lake states that the "findings support the positive effects of curriculum integration" (p. 46). Her research suggests there are multiple positive effects of integrated curriculum which include but are not limited to helping students apply skills; providing students with an integrated knowledge base that leads to
faster retrieval of information; providing multiple perspectives which lead to a more integrated (connected) knowledge base; encouraging depth and breadth in student learning; promoting positive attitudes concerning learning; and integrating curriculum provides for more quality time for curriculum exploration.

This study was developed as a possible means of combating the high dropout rate among Hispanic students at Freedom High School by providing them with an integrated, meaning-centered curriculum. The study also addressed poor vocabulary and poor reading comprehension among other students within the study group through teaching vocabulary through an integrated format. The study incorporated the literature selection, Animal Farm, because of its recurring themes that students would encounter in later pieces of literature, both expository as well as fiction. Thematic lessons, defined as lessons taught from two perspectives, i.e., English and social studies, addressed the major concepts and themes in the story as well as the vocabulary that is specific to each classroom. The study also addressed the issue of individual reading comprehension that ultimately helps students perform better on the district benchmarks. The lessons utilized a variety of literacy strategies,
lessons, hands-on projects, reader's response journals, writing, and small group discussions and whole class discussions.

The major question considered in this investigation was whether teaching vocabulary from two content areas would enhance reading comprehension for struggling readers and ELD students. The investigation also examined what strategies, if any, students employed to decipher word meanings in context and how they translate those meanings for each content area, i.e., literary terms and political terms. Finally, the study examined how teaching integrated vocabulary helped students to perform better.

Justification for the Study

Many tenth grade students, including some ELD students at the Freedom High School in Newborg, California have consistently scored lower on the district English benchmarks as well as state mandated achievement tests over the past two years in reading comprehension and vocabulary. While many of these same students score at the "basic" skills level, many more score at the "below basic" skills level. Since tenth graders must pass the High School EXIT Exam (CAHSEE), as well as other achievement tests, some form of reading intervention needs to be put
in place to help struggling readers, including ELD students, improve their vocabulary skills, reading comprehension, and test scores. Furthermore, if these students (especially English language learners) are to become successful readers and writers, then a meaningful intervention, such as teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum is indicated. However, a meaningful intervention also seems to be indicated if the school is to raise test scores on the state achievement tests. Thus, this study was significant because many of the low-achieving students who have been placed in reading and study skills classes from year to year, made no significant gains on benchmarks in either reading comprehension or vocabulary. Reading classes and study skills classes should be effective in teaching students the strategies they need to succeed in their core classes. However, Freedom High School has not seen the amount of improvement in student achievement that raises State achievement test scores. In fact, it remains evident that many eleventh graders who are also poor readers, including some non-English speaking learners, lack reading and vocabulary strategies needed to “decode” text in core subjects, especially the English classrooms. They continually fail to recognize major concepts and themes in
a piece of literature and lack comprehension of the overall text. Poor reading comprehension, the inability to determine word meanings in context, as well as a failure to recognize major themes in literature appears to be tied to problematic vocabulary found in literary selections in all genres. These same eleventh graders (especially Spanish speaking students) were unable to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words as the words appeared in context and many didn’t try to overcome these difficulties. It is possible that this lack of willingness to try to determine meanings of unfamiliar words is a result of text that is largely made up of difficult vocabulary that second-language learners have not, as yet, mastered in their course of language acquisition. The unwillingness to try to improve reading comprehension vocabulary skills found among many of the tenth and eleventh grader struggling readers at Freedom High School may also be tied, in some instances, i.e., students who were not second language learners, to the "disidentification" syndrome where they failed to see the relevance of a task they believed was not going to bring them any reward nor was it going to bring them a consequence. Thus, the question this investigation considered was whether or not teaching vocabulary through
integrated curriculum would help all struggling readers, regardless of their culture, improve their reading comprehension and vocabulary skills.

The major difference between this study and others was that of grade level. Much of the research done with integrated curriculum involves elementary classrooms as well as some middle school classes. This particular study involved only one-tenth grade English class. All of the research, including that done by Vars and Beane, shows integrated curriculum is an affective method of teaching literacy skills at all grade levels. Vars and Beane (2000) found that students in integrated or interdisciplinary classrooms did as well or better than their peers in traditional classrooms. They also suggested, after reviewing the results of numerous studies on integrated curriculum, that even in today's standards-based curriculum, found that integrated curriculum seems to improve overall standardized test scores for those students in the integrated curriculum setting. Vars also states the problems with standardized tests remains constant today and probably will not be resolved for many years to come. Thus, he suggests that teachers need to proceed carefully when considering integrated curriculum.
The analysis of the data from this study revealed that integrated curriculum is an appropriate strategy to use in high school classrooms to improve student performance both in classrooms and on "high stakes" tests.

Theoretical Basis and Organization

While there is some research on integrated curriculum at the high school level, much of it occurs at the elementary middle school level. Research shows that elementary and middle level students in integrated classrooms demonstrate better learning outcomes than those in traditional classrooms. These students show significant improvement in reading comprehension, as well as perform better in almost all academic areas. Láke (1994) states that "The integrated curriculum is a great gift to experienced teachers...It is helping students take control of their own learning" (¶ 1). Therefore, in light of the research, teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum to improve both reading comprehension and vocabulary development seems to be one way to help struggling readers and ELD students improve their reading comprehension and standardized test scores.

The theoretical basis then for this study rests in the knowledge that integrated curriculum will provide high
school students with the strategies and knowledge base to improve their reading comprehension and vocabulary skills and their scores on district benchmarks and state achievement tests.

Integrated curriculum provides learners with the opportunity to construct knowledge and meaning as they build on what they already know. They then construct knowledge for themselves; that is, each individual learner constructs meaning as he learns. According to the constructivism Theory, each individual constructs meaning and understanding of the world he lives in as he reflects on his own experiences. The guiding principles of constructivism include, a. learning is a search for meaning so learning must start with issues around which students are trying to construct meaning, b. meaning requires understanding 'wholes' as well as parts; parts must be understood in the context of 'wholes,' c. to teach well, teachers must understand the mental models students use to perceive the world and the assumptions they make to support those models, and d. the purpose of learning is for one to construct his or her own meaning, not just memorize the 'right' answers to regurgitate someone else's meaning; since education is inherently interdisciplinary, the only valuable way to measure learning is to make
assessment part of the learning process which provides students with information on the quality of their learning (funderstanding.com, ¶ 2).

Thus, students in an integrated classroom, working with vocabulary found in both social studies and English will learn as they construct meaning from the vocabulary terms.

As students learned multiple meanings of the vocabulary terms, they discovered new insights into the world because they looked at the vocabulary from a different perspective. This provided students with the opportunity to build on prior knowledge, which helped them construct meaning in a broader sense, i.e., the bigger world, than if they just learned vocabulary from a story and made no attempt to connect what they were learning the world around them. Simply stated, students learned how to build on prior knowledge (their experiences) of the world as they constructed new meaning of the vocabulary words.

Furthermore, the English language learners in the study group also benefitted from integrated curriculum because there was greater support for learning vocabulary and concepts/themes particular to these individual content areas. Other struggling readers included in this study, also received support they needed to acquire new
vocabulary and learning strategies that improved their reading comprehension in both content areas. Finally, the outcome of this study demonstrated that students in high school, just as in elementary and middle school, benefitted from integrated curriculum because they developed vocabulary strategies that enabled them to begin to derive meaning from the text they were required to read.

Organization of the Investigation

The goals of the study were help students improve academic vocabulary, learn vocabulary skills, improve reading comprehension, understand embedded concepts and themes in the novel, Animal Farm, that connect to the social studies curriculum, and finally, learn to connect prior knowledge to what they were learning and to the world. Thus, in this sense, the theory of integrated curriculum was met as students connected prior knowledge to new knowledge and then connected the new knowledge to the world, thereby improving overall reading comprehension in both content areas.

The organization of the study followed a sequential manner that began with the introduction of the new vocabulary found in Animal Farm. Students then explored
the vocabulary from the novel as it applied to both content areas. They participated in a variety of activities that supported their learning and helped them explore similarities and differences between the literature framework of Animal Farm and the political framework of the same story in social studies. These activities provided important insight into the various ways words can be used to convey meanings in a variety of contexts. As they learned to construct meaning of the new vocabulary in both content areas, they were able to apply the vocabulary strategies to other content areas.

This study was a "qualitative" study in that it was based on an individual, subjective analysis of classroom activities which included, but was not limited to outside readings, class discussions, writing assignments, outside investigation, as well as small group activities designed to broaden all students' knowledge base. The data used in the analysis of this investigation included anecdotal observations, work samples, and activity sheets designed to help construct meaning from the vocabulary and the novel. Each student's progress was evaluated on their participation in discussion groups where the novel was examined for surface meaning as well as political and economic meanings as they apply to social studies.
The investigation included one group of 35 sophomores, (Hispanic, Caucasian, African-American, and ELD students) engaged in reading the novel, *Animal Farm*, by George Orwell. The actual reading time for the novel was a designated two-week period followed by two weeks set aside for discussion and multiple activities centered around the vocabulary from the novel and applications of the vocabulary to the study of literature, and to social studies, i.e., the study of communism as both an economic and political structure. It should be noted here that extra time could be allotted if it was warranted, but could not exceed another five days.

The district benchmarks which include the vocabulary from *Animal Farm* would not take place until May, making it impossible to determine whether there was significant improvement in test scores overall for this group which could be included in the study. The December testing showed no improvement in the language arts scores; however, the scores did not drop lower as they did the previous year. Therefore, the only numeric data that could be included in this study was two tables that showed such things as numbers of dropouts among high school students, especially Hispanic males and females. Finally, the very nature of this study did not lend itself to quantitative
research because the number of participants was small and
the data was non-numeric, i.e., it was a subjective
analysis of student progress.

Limitations of this Investigation
While only one group of 35 students were allowed to
participate in this study, time constraint was the biggest
limitation to this study. This was caused in part, by the
changes that took place in the curriculum guide over the
summer. The administration granted permission to continue
the study since it began in May of 2004, with the
understanding that the curriculum guide must be followed
irregardless of what else was covered in class. This
placed a heavier reading load on the students involved in
the study because all the literature selections in the new
curriculum guide had to be read and studied. Furthermore,
the grammar and writing skills which would be tested in
December on the district bench mark also had to be
covered. This meant that the time allowed for the entire
study was a four-week window. This placed strict
limitations on the amount of time which was spent on each
segment of the study. Therefore, the constraints brought
about by the change in the curriculum guide prevented the
inclusion of data from formal assessments which the
district benchmarks would supply. These data will, however, provide a foundation of curriculum planning for the following school year.

Students spent the final week doing informal self-assessment in the form of a writing assignment, small group discussions and whole class discussions where they shared the progress they believed they made during the course of the study.

Definition of Terms Used in this Investigation

The following definitions applied to the terminology used within this study.

a. whole-group: entire class.

b. self-assessment: assessment done by individual students of own progress.

c. new vocabulary: any word used in the novel, Animal Farm, that is unfamiliar to students.

d. English language learners: students who are at any of the five levels of English development as recognized by the state of California which include:

   level one: beginning language development.
   level two, early intermediate.
   level three, intermediate.
level four, advanced.
level five is proficient.

e. struggling students: students who lack appropriate strategies to comprehend the reading material/vocabulary in a given task

f. integrated curriculum: the combining of the curriculum of two subject areas

g. thematic units: integrated lessons across two specific subject areas; i.e., English and social studies.

h. subject area: a specific core subject within the high school curriculum.

I. content area: a specific subject area found in high school curriculum.

j. district benchmarks: teacher-made achievement tests given to all students within the Freedom High School District.

k. reading comprehension: an active, purposeful process in which meaning is constructed through the interaction between the reader and the text; the ability to construct meaning through relating text to other ideas, making inferences, making comparisons, and asking questions about it and finally being able to draw conclusions.
l. prior knowledge: the knowledge students bring with them to class.

m. cross-over vocabulary: concepts found in two or more subject areas of the curriculum.

n. context clues: specific clues found within a sentence of paragraph that points to the meaning of a new or unfamiliar word; or a different meaning of a known word.

o. ELD: English language development.
Integrated curriculum, according to the research seems to work best at the elementary level but can, if taught correctly, can be a great asset for both the secondary teacher and student. Integrated curriculum occurs when courses that are normally offered individually are combined to emphasize relationships across the disciplines. For example, combining a novel such as *Fallen Angels* (war genre), to historical accounts of the Vietnam War found in the social studies curriculum provide students with a sense of connectedness between the two disciplines. Researchers such as Vogt (1997) suggest that integrated curriculum provides students with a wider knowledge base that enables them to make more connections between the subject matter being studied and the real world. "[Integrated] teaching enables students to...apply what they learn in meaningful and 'real world' contexts...they learn to relate what they are learning to their own lives" (¶ 3). Thus, it stands to reason then, that integrated curriculum can be very beneficial to all high school students, including ELD students because they
will be able to use the strategies they have learned to derive meaning from both new vocabulary and from text. Much of the research about integrated curriculum has been written by teachers or others who have been actively involved in its use in the classroom. Lake (1994) states that:

Research findings on the topic of curriculum integration fall into three major divisions...reports documenting comparison studies [ ] to determine the effectiveness of an integrated curriculum on content learning and attitude...a large number of reports written on how to implement an integrated curriculum successfully...[and] the largest body of information about curriculum integration describes teachers' experiences in the form of descriptions of thematic units they have taught... (¶. 29)

Lake (1994) suggests that one of the major flaws in the research on integrated curriculum is that much of it has involved small groups of students, making it very hard for any researcher to determine or even analyze all of the variables that come into play when student achievement is being analyzed (¶. 30). In this respect this investigation did not add any thing new to the current body of research as the group involved was one-tenth grade English class of
35. Furthermore, the time frame for this study was also very limited as it had to be completed within a very short period of time (district curriculum must be adhered to) of 4 to 6 weeks at the most rather than stretched out over the course of a year or two. These factors could have hinder the study in such a way that no significant change might be found in the vocabulary development of the study group, especially those students who are language learners. However the data gathered from this study did, if nothing else, support the data that has already been gathered from previous studies demonstrating that teaching through integrated curriculum/thematic lessons can help struggling readers and ELD students develop strategies which enable them to develop greater reading comprehension. This study laid the foundation for further exploration and work within all this teacher’s classes after the study was over to determine if other students would benefit as well from the same type of teaching.

If the results were favorable at the end of the study, it would then be time to integrate social studies vocabulary and literature vocabulary with the remaining three eleventh grade classes.

Most, if not all the research on using integrated curriculum in the classroom, suggests that whether the
integrated curriculum takes place in an elementary school classroom, a middle school classroom, or a high school classroom, and whether it is limited to two small groups of students or a 'core' group, or even an entire school, all students benefit in one or more ways from their involvement in integrated curriculum. Lake (1994) as well as Vars and Beane (1997) and many others, suggest that when students can make real connections between the curriculum and the real world, or when they actually work on real problems, which is a common element in integrated curriculum, they are more likely to be motivated to learn, thus more students stay on task and their success rate increases in all subject areas. Most of the researchers point out that another integral part of the success of integrated curriculum rests with the fact that students become actively involved in the planning of their learning and in making choices. For example, one student was quoted Oster in 1993 as saying, "I'm learning more in this course, and I'm doing better than I used to do when social studies and English were taught separately" (todaysteacher.com, 2004, ¶. 6). When students share in the planning and execution of their learning, they become more motivated to "buy into their own education" and as
they become more motivated, boredom and behavior problems are reduced significantly.

Much of the research suggests that students are not the only group that favors integrated curriculum. In fact, the research suggests that even after one year of working with integrated curriculum, over 80% of the teachers polled, preferred to continue on with integrated curriculum rather than return to a more traditional curriculum of teaching isolated facts that had few, if any, connections to other subject areas or real life. An analysis of the research findings, according to Lake, summarizes the positive effects of integrated curriculum which include:

Integrated curriculum helps students apply skills...integrated knowledge base leads to faster retrieval of information...multiple perspectives lead to a more integrated knowledge base...Integrated curriculum encourages depth and breadth in learning...Integrated curriculum promotes positive attitudes in students...Integrated curriculum provides for more quality time for curriculum exploration. (¶. 46)

Thus, it is apparent that integrated curriculum offers both teachers and students significant rewards.
Furthermore, the research suggests that when students take part in the decision-making process in the classroom, they are motivated to learn. The National Association for Core Curriculum (2000), in their analysis of the research done by Vars (1996), Beane (1997), and Arhar (1997) suggest that all of this research "point[s] to the same general conclusion: Almost without exception, students in any type of interdisciplinary or integrative curriculum do as well as, and often better than, students in a conventional departmentalized program" (¶. 13). Sabine and Manning (1996) wrote an article based on an in-depth survey done in other countries concerning the concept of integrated curriculum. Their survey found that Germany, Bavaria, Norway, and Sweden agreed that integrative curriculum is good practice and yields good results with their students. Thus, integrated curriculum seems an ideal setting to help students construct meaning and understanding from the content they are studying. A final analysis of research done by Steve English, Technology Teacher at Waterville Central School, Waterville, NY, reveals that in his setting, "the principles of his technology class was successful in integrating the course content and a project-based learning experience with the Marcellus Casket Company" (English, 2000, ¶. 2). Furthermore, the
Casket Company and the students in English's class all seem to agree that integration works. Thus, whether or not there were limitations to this particular study and whether or not significant improvement was achieved by all students, many, if not all did benefit from the integration of the vocabulary from Animal Farm with their social studies lessons about communism.

Problems of Integrated Curriculum

A plan to use partial integrated curriculum in just one classroom can be a stressful adventure in light of the content and the restricted curriculum found in most school districts across the country. One major deterrent to curriculum integration involves the state standards and proficiency tests that are set up in terms of conventional subject areas such as reading, English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Vars (1996) and Beane (1997) suggest that along with this deterrent, comes the huge problem of the sheer number of competencies that are specified in the state standards. Furthermore, one-research team estimates that it would take even a very competent student nine additional years in school to reach acceptable performance levels in all of the standards recommended by national [educational] organizations.
Teaching to the state standards is a huge task regardless of the content area. It may be even more difficult in an integrated classroom since many of the standards are not duplicated from subject area to subject area. However, planning and research did help to determine a way to connect the state standards from both English language arts and social studies that improved student mastery in both subject areas. Recent research concerning integrated curriculum done by Lake (1994) reveals that: "...the ability to make connections, to solve problems by looking at multiple perspectives, and to incorporate information from different fields, will be an essential ingredient for success in the future" (¶ 21). It is obvious that many students lose much of what they learned in isolated classrooms as they move up through the higher grades and are unable to connect their knowledge to new knowledge or to the real world outside the school. The results of achievement tests suggest that many students seem to actually lose ground as they progress up through the grades. Integrated curriculum seems to provide a method to help students make valuable connections between subject areas and to real life in such a way that prevents them from losing what was previously learned. Lake (1994) quotes Lipson in her essay as saying, "An enduring
argument for integration is that it represents a way to avoid the fragments and irrelevant acquisition of isolated facts, transforming knowledge into personally useful tools for learning new information" (¶ 21). Theoretically then, the use of integrated curriculum may provide students the skills needed to make appropriate connections between subjects within the school setting and then transfer this new knowledge to life outside of school. This might also suggest that learning vocabulary through integrated curriculum, i.e., crossover words in English language arts and social studies, may very well provide English language learners, as well as all other groups within the classroom, with the skills to make appropriate connections between what they know, what they are learning, and how it all connects to real life.

Historically, integrated curriculum has been used more frequently with middle school students. The reasons for this seem to be that integrated curriculum allows for more innovative lessons than does the standard curriculum in the high school setting. However, these historical facts do not suggest that integrated curriculum will not work in high school and in fact, because the middle school model is set up like the high school model in that students move from one class to the next, there is no
logical reason why integrated curriculum should not work in high schools.

However, struggling readers and ELD students need to be taught strategies which enable them to derive meaning from vocabulary words as they appear in context. Therefore, using integrated curriculum in an English class is an appropriate teaching tool that will help struggling readers and ELD students develop the vocabulary skills which will improve their reading comprehension across the curriculum.

Helping Struggling Readers Build Vocabulary
Struggling readers need assistance building a vocabulary that will enhance their reading and writing skills. Since the state standards include extensive skills students are to acquire in reading, writing, and communications, students who are struggling readers often fail to meet acceptable performance levels on state achievement tests. Some researchers suggest that educators have a responsibility to assist these students build a vocabulary that will help them throughout their school careers and life outside of school. Irvin (1998) suggests that there is little doubt that a strong connection between vocabulary knowledge and an individual’s ability
to read and write proficiently exists. "In fact, most educators intuitively know that people who do not know the meanings of many words are probably poor readers" (¶. 1). Readers do not need to know every word in order to comprehend what is being said. In fact, if an individual takes the time to pronounce each and every word they come across rather than allowing their sight vocabulary to move them through the text, they would move very sluggishly through any text they try to read. However, Irvin further states that if instruction of specific words is to impact overall comprehension, then the level of understanding of words must go beyond a superficial level. Irvin's comments suggest the need for establishing a set of specific vocabulary words from a given text and then pre-teaching them so that when they are encountered in text, students will have a better understanding of those words.

Why Teach Vocabulary Development?

Struggling readers often fail to understand the importance of vocabulary development and will not ask for help when they can't make sense of what they are reading. Struggling readers, including English language learners, sometimes attach wrong meanings to familiar words because they don't recognize the context the word is found in.
These students need support as they struggle with both familiar words and unfamiliar words that change in meaning. Burke (1999) strongly suggests that as readers, all of us face times when we are unable to understand the implications of a word we know and this can get us into trouble (p. 52).

English language development students struggle with oral and written language and the implications for these students is overwhelming. How can they be expected to master either oral or written language if vocabulary instruction is omitted from the classroom instruction? Burke (1999) states, "The absence of such [vocabulary] instruction and guidance undermines what most high school teachers are expected to do once they begin teaching" (p. 52). Learning vocabulary is particularly troublesome for ELD students at the high school level because they are expected to learn vocabulary with little or no vocabulary instruction in core classes when they go to high school. That is not to say that teachers are remiss in teaching specialized vocabulary contained within their subject areas, but rather many words that are constantly repeated throughout the course of a lesson or even a conversation can pose problems for the ELD students if the meanings of these words differ from what they have already learned.

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Struggling readers and ELD students need strategies that will enable them to approach vocabulary development that will turn them into effective readers. Proficient readers have a large vocabulary as well as strategies that help them read difficult text effectively. Burke (1999) suggests that students who are capable readers have an extensive vocabulary to draw from and they can use them more efficiently than their peers who lack a strong vocabulary. Furthermore, he states that those who have a wide range of words have a foundation which allows them to read and understand difficult texts; expanding their ability to communicate through writing by using more precise words (p. 53). This suggests that if struggling readers and ELD students are to become proficient readers who can derive meaning from even difficult text, they must be equipped with vocabulary skills that help them decode words and text.

Implications for the English Language Development Students

ELD students must master both oral and written language in order to exit the specialized programs they are placed in upon entering an American School. Once an ELD student is placed in a regular classroom (no longer sheltered), they would greatly benefit from vocabulary
instruction. However, all students, not just ELD students and struggling readers, benefit from vocabulary instruction. Blachowicz and Fisher (2003) suggest that:

...one difference between achieving and non-achieving students is their level of vocabulary development...for struggling readers with limited vocabularies it may be appropriate to make vocabulary the focus of instruction simply to develop their knowledge of word meanings [all] students can benefit from being taught vocabulary without any other instructional purpose. (¶. 1)

Regardless of whether or not the research agrees that vocabulary instruction is appropriate at the high school level, it seems obvious that struggling readers, at-risk students, and ELD students can all benefit from vocabulary instruction. If these students can benefit from it, then it would also be true that even the most advanced students would benefit from vocabulary instruction as they prepare for Advanced Placement classes and college entrance exams. Word knowledge can unlock print when students are able to determine correct meanings of words in context and word knowledge also helps their oral and written communication across the curriculum. Smith (1997) states that:
[Word knowledge] contributes significantly to achievement in the subjects of the school curriculum, as well as formal and informal speaking and writing...there is a common sense relationship between vocabulary and comprehension messages are composed of ideas, and ideas are expressed in words.

(¶. 1)

Smith’s research concurs with the research of others in that good readers have a strong vocabulary as well as strategies that enable them to make sense of what they are reading irregardless of whether or not many of the words are new or unfamiliar. Smith’s research also concurs with that of other research with regard to the concept that vocabulary instruction is not just the responsibility of the language arts teachers. Smith also suggests that, “...vocabulary instruction properly belongs in all subjects of the curriculum in which learners meet both new ideas and the words by which they are represented in the language" (¶. 2). In light of the research of Smith and others, it makes sense then to use integrated or thematic lessons to teach vocabulary to all students, but especially to struggling readers and English language learners. Smith goes on to state that "for learning to
occur, new information must be integrated with what the learn already knows" (¶. 9).

Struggling readers and ELD students need vocabulary strategies to determine word meanings in context in order to derive meaning from text. Teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum, i.e., teaching words from two perspectives because they consistently appear in both the English and social studies classroom, provides struggling readers as well as ELD students with strategies that help them determine word meanings. This in turn leads to greater reading comprehension. Moreover, using integrated teaching even in one class, allows students to make significant progress toward developing a greater academic vocabulary.

There has been a continuing disagreement over the last decade concerning the teaching of reading. Some researchers suggest that phonics instruction at an very early age provides the optimum skills for reading success among students. Phonics instruction works very well in the elementary grades, especially with those children whose learning styles require structure and form. For the most part, these children are able to break the code and thus excel at reading. Other students seem to need less structure and more immersion in a literature rich
environment in order to learn to read. There is no doubt that children who are exposed to more reading material and read for longer periods of time, become better readers. It is apparent that children must be exposed to print if they are to become effective communicators. Cunningham tells us that:

For vocabulary growth to occur...children must be exposed to words...and it is print that provides many such word learning opportunities...So if we want children to improve their vocabulary and reading fluency, we must get them to log many hours on printed pages...studies have demonstrated that reading a lot is effective regardless of the level of a child’s cognitive and reading ability. (¶. 7, 9)

Furthermore, students coming into a high school classroom with limited or no English language background, need more exposure to print and vocabulary development in all core subjects in order to get the support they need for both oral language and written language.

Regardless of whether a reader is an ELD student or not, if he/she has a poor vocabulary and lacks the strategies to learn new vocabulary, he/she is not going to be a successful reader in any class. Beers (2003) wrote that, “students need strategies, a scaffold that would
provide them with a framework for the thinking they needed to read...just reading without strategies isn't enough” (¶ 7). Students need strategies that will help them derive meaning from text and this comes from developing the vocabulary appropriate to the text at hand. Textbooks used in specialized classes such as social studies, English, and science, are not reader friendly. In fact, they contain many words that could be classified as rare because they are primarily found within the textbook where the student encounters them. Blachowicz and Fisher (2003) suggest that the principles of word learning apply to all students but some students may require more specific attention because of special needs. They also suggest that because of special needs, some students may need specific lessons that center on vocabulary instruction to develop their knowledge of word meanings. Their research points to the idea that all students can benefit from being taught vocabulary without any other instructional purpose. They also suggest that simply playing with language and being interested in words can have many benefits in many areas of the curriculum and in life beyond school (¶ 1). It seems then, in light of this research, that vocabulary instruction will offer the students great rewards both in and out of school. Moreover, the research suggests that
teaching vocabulary in an integrated classroom would benefit effective readers, struggling readers, as well as English language learners because they would develop the vocabulary skills that would help them derive meanings of words in a variety of contexts, as well as make connections between the words in the various content areas.

The implications for the ELD students are such that teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum provides them with the support they need in learning new words in their new language. This support gives these new words a greater chance of becoming a permanent part of their new language vocabulary.

Teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum to ELD students, struggling readers, and all students, provides them with opportunities to develop a greater personal and academic vocabulary, make connections between content areas and their experiences, as well as help them develop greater reading comprehension. The benefits of this type of teaching will help all students achieve greater success in content classes and raise test scores on district benchmarks as well as on state achievement tests.
The Investigation

One of the major differences between this investigation and others was that a lot of emphasis was placed on specialized vocabulary found in the English and social studies content areas. However, it also involved using integrated curriculum to teach reoccurring themes found in both content areas as well as such literary devices as allegory and fairy tales. The investigation included teaching vocabulary from a social studies perspective which would enable students to recognize reoccurring concepts and themes in both content areas as they became more familiar with the words and began to gain understanding of the text in both context areas. Teaching the vocabulary from the novel, Animal Farm through integrated lessons also helped students learn how to move beyond just one content area to make important connections between the themes embedded in the novel, the historical events from social studies, and the real world.

However, because of the initial question this investigation set out to answer, i.e., would teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum help struggling readers and ELD students improve their vocabulary and reading comprehension, a lot of emphasis was placed on vocabulary development with regards to increasing
understanding and ability to use new words in class discussions and in written responses to the reading.

This study was similar to other studies in that a culturally diverse population participated in the research. Further similarities included the integration of curriculum between social studies and English language arts, although most of the studies reviewed for this investigation took place at the middle school level. Other similarities included teaching students vocabulary strategies that they would be able to utilize in other content areas long after this investigation was finished.

The final results from this study were similar or identical to other studies concerning integrated curriculum because it proved successful where it was adopted. Student responses, successes, and failures also followed a similar pattern due to the content area in which the study took place. Researchers/writers such as Jim Burke have established that vocabulary instruction does indeed benefit all students. Such strategies as a vocabulary notebook, word wall, and a variety of graphic organizers, such as KWL's proved invaluable in establishing student success. However, the strategy that had the greatest impact on the students in the study group seemed to be small group activities such as "ask the
author" where students could question each other about words they were struggling with in their reading of the novel or the social studies documents being reviewed.

The theoretical basis for this investigation was that students who received vocabulary instruction would improve their lexicon as well as improve their reading skills. This in turn lead to the assumption that the participants in this study would achieve more success than previously in their English language arts classes and in other core classes.
CHAPTER THREE

STUDENTS STRUGGLE TO READ NOVELS

The high school curriculum for English language arts is built around periods of history. The tenth grade literature selections not only offer students an introduction to a variety of genres, but they also offer selections written by authors from around the world. As students progress through the tenth grade English language arts class, they learn how people from different countries and cultures view the world around them. This survey format helps students correlate the reading in language arts with the content in the social studies class.

Teaching English through an integrated curriculum format helps students connect concepts and themes they read about to historical events and people they study about in social studies. This connection also helps students make important connections between what they have learned in both content areas to the real world.

However, students who have poor reading comprehension (because of poor vocabulary) and some ELD students fail to make connections between concepts and themes found in both language arts and social studies content classes. This appears to happen, in some instances, because some
vocabulary found in language arts selections appears in a different context in social studies, suggesting the connotative meanings may differ depending on the context in which they appear. This is especially true concerning vocabulary in social studies textbooks, literature books, and novels written in a particular period of history such as the novel, Animal Farm by George Orwell. This is not to say that all students have difficulty understanding words that cross over content area lines, but many struggling readers and ELD students are confused by even the slightest differences in connotative meanings. This problem with vocabulary tends to cause struggling readers to miss the connections between literary symbols and themes in literature to historical events and people they read about in social studies. These students often complain "they just don't get it" when they are reading, suggesting they fail to comprehend because of problematic vocabulary.

Tenth grade English classes in California schools read Animal Farm by George Orwell while the tenth grade social studies classes examine the Russian Revolution and the rise of communism as a response to the social injustices under the reign of the Russian czars. Social studies classes also examine the Industrial Revolution in
Europe while language arts classes read literary selections, including poems about the human suffering during this same period of history. Since the vocabulary in Animal Farm is used to tell a fairy story, struggling readers often fail to understand the words they encounter. When they the same vocabulary in social studies, meanings even though those same words represent but since one is factual and the other is fiction, struggling readers often miss the meanings of some words because the context is different.

If all students, including struggling readers and ELD students are to excel in their academic lives, they must be able to build on what they already know and then use their new knowledge to make connections beyond the classroom, i.e., real life and the world around them. Teachers are concerned with those struggling readers who "slip through the cracks" and fail to make important connections that will assist them throughout their lives. When students fail to make connections between words found in social studies and in language arts, they will fail to make important connections between such important things as political ideologies in the real world. Burke suggests that it is important all students "know a wide range of words and how to use them effectively..." (p. 53). This
wide range of vocabulary must include both expressive vocabulary and receptive vocabulary. "Expressive vocabulary is exemplified by speaking and writing; another description might be productive because we are producing language with our mouths or pens...receptive words are those we encounter while reading or listening" (p. 53). Proficient readers are those who can produce language and comprehend language when they are listening or reading. Therefore, vocabulary instruction is necessary if all students are to have the opportunity to develop proficient communication skills, i.e., writing, reading, and speaking.

The purpose of this study then, was to integrate literary terms from the tenth grade novel, Animal Farm, into the social studies unit on communism and Russia, in an effort to improve student comprehension of the novel, vocabulary, and overall expressive (written) language.

The first section of this investigation was designed to introduce the vocabulary found in the book, Animal Farm, to the group participants. The first activity was a whole group discussion about the various words to be studied in an attempt to activate prior knowledge in all students, with particular attention paid to ELD students. Students spent the next class period discussing the new
words with a partner followed by writing the words and the meanings in their vocabulary notebooks.

The third day’s activity involved students filling out a "Word Recognition Chart," (see Appendix A). This activity encompassed thirty words for the students’ consideration. Students were instructed to consider each word thoughtfully and then place a checkmark in the appropriate box. The rationale for this activity was that students would activate prior knowledge and apply it to the word list on the activity sheet. The list of words was carefully selected from the novel because each word fit the criteria for "cross-over" words, meaning that they fit into both content areas. A follow-up activity that consisted of discussing the words with a partner was used to help students understand the problem words.

Students also kept a vocabulary notebook (spiral notebook) in which they recorded problem words as they came across them in the various five chapters.

A summation of these activities was a small group activity where students collaborated with one another and found a way to rewrite a section of the first chapter of Animal Farm in modern, everyday language without a loss of the meanings of the original vocabulary words on the list. Another follow-up activity was two-fold; first, students
worked together to make a "word wall" where each new word they encountered on the word recognition chart was recorded, accompanied by its definition. The second part of this activity included working with a partner to predict possible meanings of the unfamiliar words followed by looking them up in the dictionary for confirmation. Predictions, along with definitions found in the dictionary, were recorded in the vocabulary notebooks so they could be referred to later. Students also noted (next to each word) in their vocabulary notebook whether each word was most likely found in an English literature book or a social studies text. Words they believed were cross-over, i.e., words found in each content area, were identified in the journal. Each participant had to defend their choice as to where a word was most likely be found before the whole group and then share what new knowledge they gained in the process of carrying out these activities.

When students can derive meaning from reading, they will want to read. In order to ensure that this happened within the group, strategies were taught that assisted students determine meanings of new words in unfamiliar text which also helped them improve their reading skills.
This was especially important with ELD students who were learning English.

ELD students need strategies that will assist them in making connections between what they already know to what they are reading. Since Animal Farm involves political ideologies as well as economic theories, ELD students were encouraged to connect what they were learning to their own understanding of some of the various concepts found in the novel.

Learning new vocabulary in itself, was not enough to ensure that students comprehended what they read. They needed a scaffold that enabled them to make connections between what they were reading and other content areas, i.e., social studies textbooks. Various activities, such as word recognition charts, the word wall, group discussions, and a variety of graphic organizers such as KWL’s were included to help students connect prior knowledge to the themes and concepts and words found in the novel and social studies.

After the initial introduction to Animal Farm and the vocabulary, two class sessions were spent discussing some literary elements such as metaphor, theme, fable, allegory, and fairy story, as it applied to Animal Farm. All students needed to understand that a metaphor is a
figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another as if they both were of the same order. For example, students were given the metaphor, "her cheeks were red, red roses" and asked to share what, if any, connection there was between the two. This group discussion provided feedback which enabled all the members of the group comprehend what a metaphor is and how it is used in literature.

The next activity required each small group to work together to identify the metaphors found in the "Beasts of England" song in the novel (see Appendix B).

While studying this song for literary devices was not the major thrust of this activity, it did help students recognize how an author can use figurative language to make connections between a fairy story and real events taking place in the world. This particular metaphor made a comparison between animals/beasts and the common laborers who 'were used and abused' to provide riches and comfort for a select few in society. Students learned through group discussion of this metaphor how the common laborers in Russia suffered just as much under the new Communist Regime as they did under the Czars. This discussion led to another discussion of the Industrial Revolution in Europe and America and the plight of factory workers before the
passage of labor laws which protected them. The students decided that minimum wage laws in America were a direct result of laws passed during the early part of the twentieth century to stop the abuse of the common workers. The final part of this activity was a writing assignment that students could also submit to their social studies teacher for credit. They were to write a brief essay discussing the introduction of child labor laws in America. They were to use any of the new vocabulary words from the novel if they were applicable to their content.

An important word that students added to their journals and word walls was "animalism." They learned the dictionary definition of the term was "the doctrine that a human being is entirely animal, having no soul." Students were then asked to determine how the author, George Orwell, defined this word in the novel, Animal Farm. They worked in small groups, reviewing the previous reading, in an effort to determine if Orwell suggested all humans are without a soul (emotions, conscience) or if he was suggesting that communism as a movement, has no soul, i.e., individuals within the society have no importance other than to produce for the state. The entire group agreed that Orwell was implying that human life/individuals had no value in a communist society other
than to produce for the state. The small group discussions centered around the corruption that power brings. As students connected the literary symbolism of the word, "animalism" to the historical accounts of communism, they decided that the dogs and pigs (in the novel) were corrupted by power and were no different than the Czars. This was in turn, related to historical accounts of the communist regime's elimination of the opposition through propaganda and bloodshed.

One of the final questions students were asked to reflect on was whether or not they saw any of these characters within any other culture in the modern world in which they live. Students were directed to record their own impressions concerning power and corruption in their own world in their notebooks and a hypothetical question was posed for them to respond in writing to; if they were elected to a powerful position in government, "how could the laws be changed to prevent corruption that seems to be a natural by-product of power?"

The underlined words in each song were recorded in the vocabulary journals and students worked in pairs to determine meanings of the words that were applicable to their social studies class. The more difficult words were
then added to the word walls and students were encouraged
to jot down notes about these words in their journals.

Students were assigned to rewrite the song in modern English. They were to replace older, more archaic terminology with language that appropriate to the modern, 21st century world and the same situation in the modern world. Their word choices had to cross the content areas so that the impact of the message was applicable to a modern day political rebellion. Students then had to determine whether their word choices added to or detracted from the Orwell’s original theme. Students used the following song to develop a song for a modern rebellion that would also reflect modern ideas. Furthermore, the language they were to use also had to be modern so words like “fatherless” had to be replaced with a word they believed would mean the same thing today but would be understood by all the members of the study group, including the ELD students. The lyrics of the original song are:

Friend of fatherless!
Fountain of happiness!
Lord of the swill-bucket! Oh, how my soul is on
Fire when I gaze at thy
Calm and commanding eye,
Like the sun in the sky,
Comrade Napoleon!
(Orwell, 1996, p. 100)

As students progressed through the novel, they encountered the following words and names that they needed to comprehend. As they came across each word or name, they recorded it in the vocabulary notebook along with their prediction about its meaning or what it referred to. Later, students shared their predictions with a partner for verification of their work. Some of the words and names from this activity included; irony, capitulate, collaborate, gulag, kulak, censure, democracy, sequencing, propaganda, Tehran Conference, Nazi-Soviet Pact, Lenin, The Kremlin, The Great Purge, omniscient narrator, dynamic character, round character, flat character, symbolism, theme, and plot. As students developed an understanding of the vocabulary they found in this novel, their reading comprehension improved.

Teaching through integrated curriculum proved to be invaluable as themes and concepts in the novel were discussed in class. Students learned that Orwell's allegorical farm symbolized the real communist system. They also learned that just as in the novel when Mr. Jones was run off the farm, the intention behind overthrowing
the Czars was not in itself, evil. Students began to recognize that in a world where human rights are denied and workers are abused, rebellion is sometimes the only way out. They also realized that Mr. Jones' principles and harsh treatment of the animals which were adopted by Napoleon (ruling pig), proved that communism was not really about equality, but just another form of inequality where one dictatorship is replaced by another.

Students were asked to respond to this by writing a character sketch of Napoleon that revealed his true nature which had been hidden from all the animals in the beginning. The connection between the literary figure, Napoleon and Stalin was made possible through the integrated lessons.

Students, after analyzing Napoleon and comparing him to Stalin, were able to make connections between Orwell's allegory and what they learned in social studies about communism. These connections gave students a better understanding of the forces leading up to the Russian Revolution, the political ideologies behind it, and the difference between American democracy/capitalism and a government that tried to mandate equality for its people but was unable to make those in power abide by its mandates.
The activities in this investigation centered on vocabulary and how each word connected to both English and social studies. The last two weeks of the investigation were filled with group activities in which students shared their understanding of what they had read and discussions concerning how this novel connected to social studies and the real world even though it was a "fairy story." One of the more important conclusions that students drew from the reading and activities was that authors often use fictitious means to convey important messages to the world. Students learned that in order to comprehend the deeper meanings authors hide in their stories, they, as readers, needed a good vocabulary as well as good vocabulary strategies to determine meanings of unfamiliar and difficult words which may or may not have multiple meanings depending on the context in which they appear.

The final week was spent in whole group discussions where students shared what they learned from reading this novel. Students used the following prompt to complete their final writing assignment: Pretend that you are one of the animals listening to Squealer's speech in Chapter Five when he says, "No one believes more firmly than Comrade Napoleon that all animals are equal. He would be only too happy to let you make your decision for
yourselves. But sometimes you might make the wrong decisions, comrades, and then where should we be?" Write a detailed response stating what you think of Squealer's reasoning and relate it to what you have learned in social studies about communism.

Design of the Investigation

The question under investigation was whether or not teaching vocabulary to students in a single high school classroom using integrated curriculum helped students improve their reading/writing vocabulary significantly enough to improve overall reading comprehension in both the English class and social studies class. The design of the investigation followed a standard language arts format in that the study group participated in oral and silent reading sessions, small and whole group discussions, as well as activities designed to help them formulate an understanding of the vocabulary found in the novel. Writing assignments were used to help students understand the connections between what the author was saying in the novel and what was going on in Russia during this time in history. The readers' response journal were used to replaced quizzes and tests that would normally be given in a regular classroom because assessment is more accurate.
when students do their own assessing. Responding with thoughts and attitudes about reading provide students with a greater insight to their progress and helps them understand their own strengths and weaknesses whereas tests and quizzes only require the memorization of useless facts which will soon be forgotten.

The integrated vocabulary lessons enabled students to transfer word meanings from the novel to the social studies content which led to a greater comprehension of the themes the author wants readers know. This in turn helped students connect those themes to the world’s response to communism after the novel appeared in print.

The purpose of the investigation was not to determine how many facts and definitions students remembered, but rather how well they comprehended the underlying themes and symbolism portrayed through the author’s choice of vocabulary. More pointedly, it was thought that students’ understanding of the vocabulary deepened because they were encountering vocabulary terms in two subject areas. That is, because students worked with terms in two integrated subject areas, i.e., English Literature and social studies, they would deepen their appreciation of those terms because of the dual focus.
As students approached the new words under investigation, they were asked to draw on their previous knowledge of the words (if any) and then connect this knowledge to the new words they were learning. It was important that students did not separate the words from the text in an effort to just memorize definitions so they were asked to predict meanings of new or unfamiliar words in the context in which they appear and they were then instructed to jot down those predictions in the vocabulary notebook. In an effort to prevent the memorizing of isolated facts, i.e., word meanings, themes and concepts from both content areas, students worked together in small groups of two or three on difficult word meanings and then came together with the whole group to discuss their predictions of word meanings in both content areas. The discussion groups were designed so that each participant gave and received feedback concerning their predictions of new words. Dictionaries were only utilized after students had exhausted all of their knowledge in an effort to determine meanings.

Teaching through integrated curriculum helped provide students with a greater knowledge of words and their connections to both literature and social studies while also helping students connect what they were learning to
the real world. An expanded vocabulary helps students have greater reading comprehension and when these are connected, students perform better in their classes and on achievement tests. The integration of teaching key vocabulary through two subject areas was the variable that resulted in this great depth.

Population of Students

The population of the study group consisted of 35 tenth grade English students of mixed cultures, backgrounds, and economic status. The group included a small group (seven) of students classified as level three English language learners. The stages of English language development range from level one, which is the beginning stage; a student new to the English language and has little understanding but gradually begins to develop basic understanding of what is being communicated. Level two is early intermediate stage meaning that within one or two years of beginning to learn English, the student’s understanding grows, especially in situations where the information is familiar. Level three is the intermediate stage and these students are able to speak in more complex sentences but still make errors. Increased understanding makes it easy for the student to participate in everyday
conversations. This level is usually reached within two or three years of beginning to learn English.

Level four is the early advanced stage (past level three) but the student still makes speaking and written errors in English. These students are, however, able to participate in academic discussions and their errors in speaking and writing do not interfere with communication. Level five is the advanced stage and the final stage. These students are for the most part, ready to be fluent English speakers and writers. There may still be some errors in grammar, mechanics, spelling, and vocabulary that need to be improved. Even though these language learners were at levels three and four, careful attention was given to their comprehension of both the vocabulary and the novel as a whole as well as to what was being taught from the social studies perspective. It was important also that they understood how the vocabulary crossed the content areas so they were able to respond to the writing assignments successfully since most the essays involved the social studies content of the investigation. The ELD students were paired with other students in the group who had strong reading skills and demonstrated the use of strategies when difficult text was encountered. The remainder of the population in the study group was made up
of five African-American students, five white students, one native American student and the rest (seventeen) were Hispanic students who have been in the United States (California), most of their life and speak fluent English.

What the Data Revealed

The sequence followed to collect the data from this investigation followed this format: first, a collection of anecdotal notes was compiled by the teacher after group discussions and small group activities. The notes were arranged in such a manner as to determine which students seemed to be progressing and those who seemed to lack confidence in their progress and finally, those who appeared to be making no progress at all. The next step was an analysis of the written work students did to determine the amount of progress or lack of progress by each student at different points during the study. This analysis was then compiled with the data collected from the anecdotal notes in an effort to get a clearer picture of which students still needed re-teaching, i.e., words that were confusing, themes, concepts, and characters that were confusing. Informal interviews were conducted once a week with each participant.
The notes from these interviews were used to help ascertain a student’s understanding of the cross-over vocabulary, i.e., words that appeared in social studies as well as in the novel. These interviews were also helpful in determining if students were learning how to use vocabulary strategies to connect new words in the novel to social studies and to the world. These data were compiled with the other data already collected in an effort to determine the overall validity of the study; could teaching vocabulary from both content areas, English and social studies, give students vocabulary strategies and reading comprehension needed to succeed in both content areas? The data was also used to discover whether or not teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum did, in fact, impact students’ vocabulary skills and reading comprehension in such a way as to help them connect themes to historical events and people as well as to the world around them. This was especially important because the allegory found in Animal Farm aligned with the social studies curriculum surrounding the study of the Russian Revolution and the problematic rise of communism in the world its impact on other super powers such as the United States.
Data from the student self-analysis papers written during the final week of the investigation revealed that teaching integrated vocabulary to students supported their learning because their reading comprehension improved and they were able to determine many of the connotative meanings in the novel as well as the denotative meanings of many of the same words they found in the social studies class. The use of integrated curriculum to teach vocabulary, i.e., teach word meanings which appear in both content areas, provided a natural bridge between word meanings, themes, and historical events and people, thus allowing students to make connections between the two content areas. Moreover, students were able to understand the historical significance of the novel to the Russian Revolution, the fear of the rise of communism in the world and the subsequent Cold War between Russia and the United States. Thus, students learned strategies to transfer word meanings to other content areas as well as make natural connections between what they learned and the real world. Finally, these data suggested that this investigation demonstrated that teaching integrated curriculum, including integrated vocabulary, is important to student progress in terms of reading comprehension and student assessment.
The analysis of the written work was recorded in the form of teacher anecdotal notes that were compiled weekly. The final class discussion and written assignment were designed to reveal each student’s progress throughout the course of the study. The essays and discussions were also used as a means of determining whether teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum had a significant impact on reading comprehension, as well as understanding of the themes that related to historical events and people found in the social studies curriculum.

A comparison was made between the results of this study and other studies in an effort to determine whether or not this particular investigation addressed the question it was designed to address and whether or not the results of the investigation were valid based on the findings of researchers. The studies done by Blachowicz and Fisher (2004), Irvin (2001), Smith (1997) suggest using integrated curriculum to teach vocabulary to struggling readers and ELD students provide them with a better foundation upon which to build subsequent word knowledge, thereby supporting the findings of this investigation; struggling readers, as well as ELD students experienced significant improvement in vocabulary skills and reading comprehension that helped them make
connections to what they were studying in their social studies class.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis of this investigation involved analyzing student writing done both in the classroom and at home. Writing samples were taken before the onset of the investigation and throughout the study to determine how much change was taking place and which students were making progress and which, if any, were not making progress. The content of the writing was the key factor in determining whether or not students comprehended the vocabulary in the novel both from the language arts and social studies perspective (cross-over vocabulary). That is, no analysis was made of grammar, spelling, or mechanics in these writing samples. If the teaching of vocabulary through integrated curriculum was successful, students’ writing would demonstrate a greater comprehension by providing them with the tools needed to complete the assignment.

All of the data was compared to the CAT-6 results from 2002 and 2003 and the benchmark results from the past two years for Freedom High School. However, since the CAT-6 will not be administered until the spring of 2005,
there will be no way to determine if any of the participants were able to raise their scores over those from the previous year. Thus, the final results of the study were determined by student progress in the English language arts and social studies classroom, i.e., better comprehension of the reading as demonstrated through group discussions and student writing and finally, success that came in the form of better test scores in social studies and better grades overall and higher self-esteem.
CHAPTER FOUR
WHAT THE FACTS REVEALED

The investigation was designed to ascertain whether or not teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum (English and social studies) would significantly impact reading comprehension for struggling readers and ELD students. More specifically, the investigation used an integrated teaching method, i.e., teaching the words found in the novel, Animal Farm from both a literary and social studies perspective since many of the words appear in both content areas. The reasoning for this lies in the fact that words can vary in meaning depending on the context in which they appear. This oftentimes confuses struggling readers and ELD students who are less familiar with the English language. Words in literature, more specifically, in Animal Farm, can change meaning in social studies since Animal Farm is an allegory and the social studies text is non-fiction. It was equally important that students understand the difference in meanings of words so that they would understand how to connect the themes and concepts from the novel to historical accounts of the Russian Revolution, the Cold War and the world response to communism they learned about in social studies. Thus,
teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum not only helped students develop a stronger vocabulary, but it also provided a natural bridge which students could use to make connections between Orwell's themes and what transpired in history.

Many of the words students encountered in Animal Farm were political in nature, making it appropriate to integrate the vocabulary in such a way that students naturally made connections between a fictional story with embedded historical facts and the actual historical accounts found in the social studies text. If the investigation was designed correctly, the results would align with those of earlier researchers who found that teaching vocabulary and utilizing integrated curriculum even in just one classroom helped struggling readers, English language learners, and the general population of the class improve their personal vocabulary as well as their academic vocabulary and their reading comprehension.

Reading Improvement

Reading improvement was measured in terms of better comprehension, greater familiarity with root words, prefixes, and suffixes, as well as greater access to text. This means that students were able to discuss the reading
within small group and large group sessions. Finally, reading improvement was measured in students’ ability to respond in writing to what they read. Since the small groups discussed the vocabulary, themes, and characters from the literary and social studies perspective, it was important for them to write from a social studies perspective to ensure they were making the connections between the two content areas. This would further demonstrate their comprehension of the reading material.

As the investigation progressed, students began to use such techniques as questioning the author, i.e., “what thought are you trying to convey through your use of metaphors in the song?” in their reader response journals and in their small group discussions which took place once a week. During the weekly small group discussions, one student took on the role of author and the others questioned him/her about specific elements in the story that required further clarification in terms of the political issues that plagued Europe and America, concerning communism and its seemingly strong threat to countries’ whose economic systems were capitalistic. This activity was far more successful in terms of vocabulary comprehension than vocabulary worksheets because words were discussed in much greater detail which lead to
greater understanding by all members of the group. Furthermore, word discussions led to discussions about characters such as Napoleon and he was likened to Stalin.

The connection between Napoleon and Stalin helped students recognize the hidden references to Stalin's treatment and murder of many of his own people to maintain his dictatorship of Russia. Students agreed at the end of the investigation that this activity, i.e., "ask the author," was actually the most helpful and more enjoyable. However, if one member of a group had not completed the assigned reading, this activity was not successful. Furthermore, students also stated that this activity helped with their writing because they gained a greater understanding of literary meanings as well as political meanings of the particular events in the story such as the building of the windmill, and the reactions of the animals to the eventual treatment they received from the pigs. When the students fully comprehended the vocabulary, they were able to understand that the pigs represented those in power after the Russian Revolution and how power corrupted them.
Introduction to the Word List

The preliminary class discussion of the first list of vocabulary words was designed to help the students, especially English language learners activate prior knowledge of such terms as "communism, comrade, courage, victory, authority, tactics, contemptible, and revolution." The words were first introduced singly on an overhead transparency without any context so students could see them in print and hear them pronounced. The next transparency contained each word in a sentence so that students could see them in context. As the discussion progressed, the teacher guided the group into making connections between the words and the social studies curriculum. This discussion was important in that as students began work on the first word recognition chart, they were more likely to connect the words in print to the discussion through familiarity/similarity. While the majority of the group had little difficulty with this activity, the English language learners still struggled to recognize many of the words in written form. (See Appendix C for samples of some ELD Word Recognition Charts) It appeared that the ELD students were struggling with the written form of the words in that they were trying to make connections between the way the words sounded when
pronounced and the way they looked in print. Students were asked to take the list of words home locate them in context; they were to write down the page number where they found the words, and then copy down the sentence in which the words appeared. Students would then share how the context impacted the meaning of the words. This activity helped those students who were still struggling with the meanings of some of the difficult words understand them better. Some students showed significant understanding at the end of this activity; this activity was used each time a new list of words was given to students.

Graphic Organizers and Word Walls: Tools for Understanding Words

The word recognition chart was designed with three columns; "very familiar, slightly familiar, and very unfamiliar." Students were asked to complete the chart by checking the appropriate column for each of the thirty-one words. The ELD students (seven) checked more boxes in the "very unfamiliar" column than any other students. The most unfamiliar words were, "maltreating, faction, reconciled, contemptible, cryptic, maxim, ignominious, eloquence, retinue, lamentation, czar, superannuated, animalism, idealism, and allegory." After this activity was
completed, the entire group reviewed the words again. The group was then divided into smaller groups (three or four students each) to work together building a word wall. Each group only had one class period to decide among themselves which words to put on the word wall and which words to put into their vocabulary notebooks. After this initial activity, the members of each group were responsible for updating the word wall and vocabulary journals daily without any specific time allotted for it.

The members of each group spent a few minutes sharing their own thoughts about the words and how they thought the words fit into the social studies curriculum. Each group then summarized their discussion to the entire class at the end of the activity. The data from the small group discussions revealed that many of the students were more familiar with the words than they originally thought, while a few (the group of ELD students) were confused by the preliminary discussion of some words; thus they checked the “very unfamiliar” column on the word recognition chart. These data suggested that even though the ELD students were at level four in their language development, some still struggled with alphabetic sounds in the English language, thus making it necessary to consider how best to approach this as each new set of
words was introduced. The best method to help the ELD students appeared to be to pair them with native English speakers so they could hear and see the words correctly from the outset of each new activity. Another option utilized during the investigation was to have the words translated into Spanish by a student who spoke both English and Spanish fluently, thereby allowing the ELD students hear the sounds in both Spanish and English so they could make the correlation between the two languages, thus providing for a better understanding of words such as "faction" and "reconciled."

During the small group discussions, a few cues were offered by the teacher that helped students who were struggling, gain a better understanding of the words under discussion. The vocabulary activities based on the word recognition chart were designed to provide each student with a positive experience in working with new and unfamiliar words. All those who participated (five students refused to complete the activity sheet or participate in discussions) stated in their interviews with the teacher, that these activities helped their understanding so much that they were more willing to share in open discussion that previously. The words that some students were seemingly confused by, but later stated they
recognized because they had either seen, or had heard used were, "reconciled, contemptible, eloquence, idealism, and allegory."

Learning Prefixes and Suffixes Improves Word Comprehension

The pre-teaching of vocabulary made a significant difference for the struggling readers as well as for the ELD students in the group because it gave them a foundation on which to build new knowledge as they began to break words down into parts, i.e., prefixes, suffixes, and root words. Some students stated in their interviews that knowing the meaning of simple prefixes and suffixes such as "mal" and "ing" helped them recognize root words that they already knew; thus they were "tapping into prior knowledge."

Further results of the group work revealed that as students broke words down, i.e., separated root words from prefixes and suffixes, many predicted the meanings of the words more accurately. Two such words were, "maltreating" and "laborious." All the members of the investigative group were familiar with the root word, "treat" and "labor" and were able to predict what the prefix "mal" meant as well as the suffixes, "ing" and "iours." All members agreed that "mal" meant poor or bad and "ing"
meant that it was still going on, thus "maltreating," meant "being treated bad continually." All members of the group recorded the prefixes and suffixes with appropriate meanings in the vocabulary notebooks for later reference and use with other unfamiliar or new words. This strategy proved invaluable as some of the ELD students demonstrated greater success in predicting word meanings as they continued to read the novel. When asked, students stated that they believed the preliminary vocabulary activities enabled them to make better sense of the text while helping them learn strategies that they could use when they read alone.

The pre-teaching activities that were used with each word list included placing the words on a transparency with their definition. Each word was discussed and then another transparency with the words and their variant meanings for social studies was put on the overhead and discussed. To ensure understanding, a transparency with the words in sentences was put on the overhead for discussion. Students were able to see how context can change meanings of words. The final part of the pre-teaching activity involved students locating the words in the story as they read and writing the sentence with the word in their vocabulary notebook for later reference.
The only time these pre-teaching activities bore no impact on a student's progress occurred when a student refused to participate by completing the reading assignments, or writing in their reader-response journal. Unfortunately, by the end of the investigation, a group of five students (three ELD's and two African Americans) failed to finish the novel, participate in the small and large group activities, and do the writing assignments. The common attitude among this group of students seemed to be that they believed there were no consequences for their lack of participation and thus, they were not going to read or participate because reading was "boring." Each one of these five stated that Animal Farm had no connection to their life and they didn't need to read it. Since that time, three of the five were expelled for possession of a controlled substance and one was transferred to another class because of discipline problems, leaving only one of the original five of the non-participants in the study group. Thus it would appear that teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum had little or no effect on this particular group of five because of circumstances that went beyond the classroom.
Making Connections to the Real World Improves Comprehension

Students have better reading comprehension when they make connections between the vocabulary words, symbolism, and themes from a story to other areas of life such as subjects being studied in social studies and current events, i.e., what's happening in the world. For example, when students learned how to transfer the meaning of the word "communism" as it was found in the novel they were reading, to the study of communism in social studies, they understood more of the symbolism in Animal Farm. Learning vocabulary through integrated curriculum allowed students to focus more on connotative meanings of the same words which deepened their understanding and provided a bridge to connect what they were learning to the real world.

Students agreed that everyone, i.e., that is, each member of a society, is entitled to an equal share of the wealth of their nation. However, they did not agree what form that equality should take. When asked if they were willing to divide their weekly allowance equally among three other students who were less fortunate than themselves, all emphatically stated there was no way they would share their money. However, each student seemed to feel that if someone told them they were hungry, then
buying food was a charitable act and therefore, it was an acceptable thing to do. The students were asked to consider the people who "panhandle" (beg for money or food) on Citrus Bridge or in front of Target or other stores, and their seemingly unfortunate plight in life, all agreed that those individuals should go find a job so they could earn their own money. This discussion presented an entirely new understanding of what it means to live in a country with a "free market" economic system and protection of basic rights and freedoms. Students obviously had a clearer understanding of implications of Orwell's Animal Farm rebellion because they were able to comprehend how words could be used differently in two subject areas; i.e., integrated vocabulary in two subject areas promoted a richer understanding that did not stop at the end of the study. They also had a better understanding of what members of a communist society might experience on a day-to-day basis.

As students continued to work with vocabulary in their small groups, most continued to make sense of the concepts and themes embedded in the novel, i.e., students were able to connect what they were reading to the historical accounts they were studying in social studies. For example, one student reported to his small group that
he now understood why people sometimes revolt against their government when they are denied basic things they need to live. Furthermore, students began talking about things like the "Russian Revolution," "The Iron Curtain," "Joseph Stalin," and "idealism," from a social studies viewpoint. Most students reported in their interviews with the teacher that studying vocabulary through an integrated curriculum approach made it was easier to understand the symbols and themes in the story because they understood the difference between reality and symbolism which they had not really understood before. Many reported that when they first began to read chapter one, they were confused by the author's use of animals to portray various character types in a society. However, working with the vocabulary both in advance and during the reading, had helped their understanding and they were able to connect what they were reading to the themes and to what they were studying in social studies.

Asking the Author: A Good Strategy to Improve Comprehension

Teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum, that is, teaching vocabulary through both English literature and social studies, provides the perfect setting for extension activities which engage all students
in the learning process. For example, the small group activity of "asking the author" provided excellent feedback among group members which in turn provided clarity of meaning both of themes and words. This was especially true with one group that asked their author why he chose specific words to tell his story. Other groups asked "the author" to connect the fictional events of the novel to the factual ones in history. This particular activity was an important part of integrated teaching because students had to determine what they knew and what they wanted to learn and what was the best method for gaining that knowledge. Each student had a chance to be the author because it provided them with an opportunity to express their own ideas verbally to their group, thus helping ELD students further develop their speaking skills along the way. The two basic segments of this activity included a 'literary' segment where the author talked about word choices, themes, etc., found in the novel. The social studies segment came next and the author would make connections between the characters, themes, words, etc., to the historical accounts being studied in the social studies. While the social studies teacher did not collaborate in this study, he did offer some interesting feedback concerning student progress after the conclusion
of the last 'ask the author' session. He stated that some of the students made important contributions to the class discussions, suggesting that these students' self confidence was also improving as their vocabulary and reading skills improved.

Using Synonyms and Antonyms to Improve Word Comprehension

The next vocabulary activity involved a work sheet entitled, Synonyms and Antonyms. While this activity is primarily an English language arts activity, connections to social studies, i.e., integrated curriculum, were natural since words could be looked at from both content areas. The preliminary activity for this section involved a "whole group" discussion in which the words, "synonym" and "antonym" were defined and examples given so that students knew what they were looking for as they worked on the activity sheet. Students were asked to jot down the definition of synonym and antonym in their vocabulary notebook and brainstorm in an attempt to find an example of each. Each student was asked to share one example of a synonym and antonym with the whole group during the class discussion. This particular activity was repeated for the new words in each chapter so that students would become familiar with using both synonyms and antonyms; this was
an important skill for students to learn both for reading comprehension and for achievement test scores. All but four students shared an example of a synonym and an antonym. The four who did not participate in this activity complained they didn’t have enough time to complete their brainstorming. They were instructed to continue on brainstorming while the rest of the group continued the discussion. Students were then handed the worksheet and asked to select five of the words from the original list of thirty-one words and use a dictionary or thesaurus to find three synonyms and one antonym for each and write them down in their vocabulary notebook. Some of the words students selected included “victory, courage comrade, dedicated, and equality.” Some of the synonyms for victory included “win, complete, and achieve.” The word “defeat” was selected as the antonym by all the students. A lot of collaboration took place during this activity as some students were more proficient in using dictionaries and thesauruses than others were. This activity helped students use “critical thinking” skills to determine appropriate meanings of the synonyms and antonyms they found to ensure correct word choice.
Writing Improvements

Students need to be proficient writers, regardless of whether or not they are in a language arts class or a social studies class. Learning vocabulary through integrated curriculum, i.e., English and social studies content areas, provides students with a greater vocabulary to use in their writing. This enables students to write with more understanding and they have more control over the content they write. Thus, teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum provides for more than just better reading comprehension, it helps students improve their word choices when they respond in writing to a literary selection or a social studies unit.

The preliminary writing assignment, based on chapter one, was designed with two areas in mind; the first was the students' abilities to formulate ideas and opinions about the reading, and then write an essay about one strong opinion they had developed about something in chapter one. Some examples of student writing show that some struggle with animals that talk and act like men. For example, one student wrote in his introductory paragraph:

"I don't think it's right that animals think their lifespans are miserable. They were made to be used for food or to work and men are supposed to be smarter
than animals. I also don't think its right what the author says about man is the only creature that consumes without producing. Men and women have babies all the time. I think if animals were really mistreated like the author says, there are laws that would punish them.”

This example shows the struggle the student is having at this time with the “fairy tale” animals as characters. Another student wrote the following paragraph:

“I think that sometimes rebellion is good, like on the farm where Mr. Jones was so mean to the animals by making them work for their food. But I also think that rebellion can be bad if people who haven’t done nothing get hurt or killed. I think that the rebellion in Iraq is like this story. Their president mistreated them and made them work and suffer and they got noting for it but pain and suffering. I think it was right what we did over there. Mr. Jones should have been killed or something so he couldn’t hurt no more animals on the farm.”

This student demonstrates an ability to connect ideas between the story and the real world. She also seems to have a good understanding of most of the vocabulary we studied in Chapter One.
Students were asked to share their writing with a partner and give each other feedback on the content only. Grammar, spelling, and mechanics were not to be considered. This particular activity proved valuable as students had gained more confidence in their understanding of what they had read and felt they could write about it. Furthermore, with this confidence came a greater willingness to discuss weaknesses in their writing with a peer. The culmination of this writing collaboration was to pair weaker writers with stronger writers in an effort to provide helpful feedback so that weaker writers could see what needed to be changed and understand why the changes were needed. Their overall writing improved because the feedback they received supported their efforts to construct good writing from the reading.

Only four of the ELD students continued to struggle with re-writing and that appears to be attributable to a lack of English vocabulary. These students were paired with non-ELD students who were also strong writers in an effort to help these ELD students build a stronger English vocabulary, especially a "written" vocabulary. This work continued through four class sessions, thus allowing ample time for the completion of each step. Students were asked to read their writing aloud to their group members and the
listeners were to provide “positive” feedback by sharing five things they liked about the writing. Interviews with students revealed that overall, students were making significant progress in using strategies to determine meanings of new or unfamiliar words in context and were trying to use that knowledge to make their writing better overall. All liked the idea of feedback that was restricted to positive elements in their writing as it helped them separate what was perceived as good from what was not. This was a great, “non-threatening” means of helping students identify strong and weak areas of their writing responses to literature.

These types of activities were carried out for each chapter of the novel and when the novel was finished, each student, except for the initial five who refused to participate, voiced that they didn’t mind writing about the reading as much now as in the beginning. When they were asked to explain why, the consensus was that they felt more confident about their own ideas and were more willing to take chances with their writing. Part of this seems attributable to the fact that their final writing was graded holistically by peers and no failing marks could be assigned to anyone who had at least attempted to write and make corrections based on feedback they had
received. Those who needed to rewrite were paired with stronger writers and they collaborated and rewrote the essays until each student felt confident that their content was clear, i.e., ideas were conveyed in a clear, concise manner and discussions of personal opinions were based on facts that either came directly from the novel or from what was studied in their social studies class. Some students tried using some of the new vocabulary in their writing and did a good job. For example, one student wrote:

Mr. Jones was selfish when he didn’t allow the animals to have more freedom. He is like a dictator who wants everything for himself and doesn’t want anyone else to have anything. He is like the ruler in Iraq that just wants to rule over his people but doesn’t care for their suffering. Mr. Jones got what he deserved because he was like the dictator of Russia, Mr. Stalin, who only wanted more power and killed anyone who opposed him. The animals were comrades but Mr. Jones was the boss and he was mean and a dictator, deciding which animals would work hard and which ones would die. He was cruel and deserved what he got, a rebellion.
This student demonstrates a willingness to try new words in her own writing but more importantly, she understands some of the themes Orwell has embedded in the story. Her overall writing success seems directly attributable to learning new words in the integrated setting, i.e., from two content areas, and then having enough confidence to incorporate some of them into the writing. Even though the social studies teacher did not have the time to collaborate for this investigation, he did agree to read the essays and give students credit for one major assignment in his class, making this assignment a “plus” for each student.

As the reading of the novel progressed, activity sheets such as “Word Origins and Word Parts” were handed out (see Appendix D). These were designed to help students learn how to determine word meanings through identifying the root word and its meaning, and then apply the meanings of prefixes and/or suffixes (found in dictionaries supplied in class) in an effort to improve their word comprehension skills as well as their ability to predict word meanings from the context in which the word is found. This activity, repeated twice a week for thirty minutes and for each chapter, provided students with strategies they can employ when they are reading any text. The
results of these activities varied in that some students worked to complete the activity sheets while others only partially completed them. When those who failed complete the activities were asked during their interviews why they left certain areas blank, they responded more often with “it was too time consuming.” However, after observing these students doing various activities, time doesn’t really seem to be the issue here. The issue seems to be more that they were afraid to ask for help when they didn’t understand something. Thus, the results of this particular section of the study lacks any significance as to the overall progress of the students in learning how to complete these types of tasks to improve their vocabulary knowledge. The ELD students made the most significant progress in these activities and seemed more confident in employing these strategies as they read. Some of the words used in this activity included, “superannuated, revolution, reconciled, contemptible, counteract, commandments, and animalism.” Each of these words proved difficult for students who were not used to connecting words between subject areas. For example, while the majority of the students were familiar with the word “revolution,” it proved difficult for some when they broke it down into parts. Since this word posed problems for
some students, the group was asked to revisit their vocabulary notebook and review the notes concerning words that have multiple meanings. They were reminded that a word’s meaning is dependent on the context in which it appears. One class period was spent discussing “revolution” and its various meanings. Students knew that in science, the idea of revolution might apply to the planets because they had discussed how planets revolve around suns or how moons revolve around planets. Thus, they tried to use the root word “revolve” in determining meaning rather than the root word, “revolt,” thus their predicted meaning did not fit the context the word “revolution” was found in. Thus, part of the difficulty in the early stages of reading the novel included these types of errors. However, by the end of the investigation, over half of the group learned how to determine the correct root word and thus were able to read with greater comprehension as they delved into chapter five. Some students reported back that working with the vocabulary in the novel had helped them understand more of their reading in social studies. The final analysis of this activity suggests that using activities such as the one above in an integrated setting, i.e., teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum, allows students to discover
important connections for themselves. They become empowered to investigate, make inferences, and draw conclusions about what the author is implying in the novel as well as connect the symbolism to social studies and the real world.

The final class session for this study was an open discussion of the entire unit. The question posed to the students was, “What have you learned about vocabulary from this unit that you didn’t know before, and how can you use that knowledge to help you in all of your classes throughout the school year?” The question was broad-based to allow students to reflect on what they perceived they had learned about vocabulary development, i.e., strategies to help them learn new words, as well as how to write about literature and then make connections between subject areas. Some of the responses included such statements as, “I think I can figure new words out in stories and in social studies but I don’t know if it will work in science and math.” “I feel like I know a lot more now because I can see the connections between Animal Farm and what we are studying in social studies.” “I don’t know if I can figure hard words out yet but I think I will try.” “I don’t see why we have to know words like these in this story because we are never going to use them again because
they are not everyday words." Each response was used to spark a discussion among the members of the group and this brought a greater understanding concerning how students perceive learning activities in class. Out of the thirty-five students in the study group, four students declined to comment at all. Thus the verbal responses by the members of the study group reveal little in terms of significant progress in vocabulary development. However, student writing demonstrated much more progress in terms of vocabulary development as over half the group used many of the new words in their "reader response" journals as cues to facts they felt they needed to remember for both classes. The social studies teacher stated that class discussions with this particular group of students had improved significantly in that students who never participated before, were now openly discussing the reading. He also reported that test scores had risen significantly suggesting that students were comprehending what they were reading more than previously.

Therefore, the data from this study suggests that the investigation proved what it set out to prove, i.e., teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum helps students improve their reading comprehension as well as their own vocabulary, including their academic vocabulary.
Thus, the conclusion was drawn, that students do better in an integrated setting because they learn how to make important connections to other subject areas and to life. Furthermore, students gain more self-confidence as they gain more control over their learning and in their abilities. As the social studies teacher revealed through his comments, this self-confidence spills over into other subject areas and into the student’s life outside the classroom.

Prior to this investigation, since this was a regular tenth grade English class (CP), the class followed a fairly regular routine of completing a “sponge” activity that consisted of grammar work. This activity was part of the district’s plan to improve CST scores for all tenth graders. Students would then either read a story orally or silently, followed by a class discussion. The class discussion was the most painful part of the day because only five or six students would participate while the others refused to talk because they had either not done the reading or they didn’t understand what they read. Tests and quizzes were a total failure because students couldn’t answer questions about a story they refused to read. Furthermore, assigning questions at the end of stories was equally useless because students would simply
look up answers without reading the selection. The investigation was a break away from this routine to find other ways to help students improve their reading comprehension as well as help motivate them to become active learners where they get involved in what’s going on in class.

The only students who made no significant progress were those who did not participate in class. It cannot be said that the investigation failed them, however, because while they did not participate in the activities or reading, they listened to what was going on and this will have an impact on their learning at some point. These students, seemingly “reluctant learners,” appeared to be at a completely different level of development and thus, at some point, what they heard and learned during this investigation will help them later. The only consequences this group faced for lack of participation in the investigation came in the form of grades. This had a significant impact on their quarter grades and while their peers did well, i.e., they received good grades, this group failed.

Whether or not this particular study group will continue to make progress in vocabulary development as they move into the next grade and have different teachers
cannot be predicted because students often respond
different situations in very different ways. However, it
is logical that the students who participated in this
investigation will continue to make progress in reading
comprehension and vocabulary development because they
learned important strategies they didn’t have before and
they have already improved their vocabulary.

The initial investigation was concerned whether or
not teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum
would help improve students’ vocabulary skills and reading
comprehension. Reading improvement in this investigation,
was measured in terms of better comprehension, greater
familiarity with root words, prefixes, and suffixes, and
provide students with greater access to text. Reading
comprehension was considered improved when students could
discuss what they read in both small groups and the large
group and when they could write about their reading. As
the investigation progressed, students spent more time
writing in their reader response journals and wrote more
penetrating questions about the reading. Some of the
questions they wrote when questioning the author in their
journal included, “what thought or idea are you trying to
convey through your metaphors in the song?” “How do you
know, Mr. Orwell, that all communists were dictators and
abused their power?” “Mr. Orwell, how can we prevent this type of abuse against citizens from ever happening in the world again?” These questions show that students were thinking about what they were reading and they understood most of the themes along with comprehending the vocabulary.

Teaching vocabulary development through integrated curriculum worked to improve reading comprehension among the study group. Each member of the study group that participated in the final class discussion stated they would like to see all their core classes taught this way because it helped them understand what they were learning better because they could see the applications of vocabulary words in more than one setting. Thus, this study was a success because even this small group of students made significant progress. In light of the results of the investigation, it did align with the research results of other researchers because even a small group such as this one, made significant progress in vocabulary development which helped their reading comprehension and their writing about literature as well as their understanding in their social studies class. These results bear consideration for the next group coming in September of 2005.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reading is the essential element in education that unlocks the future for all children. Many of those who cannot read well end up dropping out of school long before they earn a high school diploma, thus compounding their problems as they move into the work force. While some will go back to school after a few years to earn a diploma, many will end up on welfare, or even worse, enter a life of crime or live on the street. Research done by the National Institute for Literacy, 1998, found that:

Low literacy is strongly related to crime. 70% of prisoners fall into the lowest two levels of reading proficiency. Low literacy is strongly related to unemployment. More than 20% of adults read as low as or below a fifth grade level \[\] far below the level needed to earn a living wage. 75% of today’s jobs require at least a ninth-grade reading level. Low literacy is strongly related to poverty. 43% of those with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty...37 million people live below the federal poverty level in America, and the majority of these are women and
children. (National Institute for Literacy, 1998, ¶. 1-5)

Since reading is the foundation for a child’s life from the time they enter kindergarten until they retire at the age of 65, the child who cannot read well in the early grades will continually lose ground as he/she progresses through school. This problem thus creates a wide gap that will affect a child for the rest of his/her life. Wren (2001) says Stanovich (1998) calls this the “Matthew Effect,” (the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, ¶. 2) suggesting that those youngsters who fail to develop proficient reading skills early in life (before the fourth grade) will struggle throughout their lives because poor reading skills will lock them out of more rewarding, higher paying jobs. The reasons why children become struggling readers vary, but according to the research, there is a strong link between vocabulary development and success in reading. Irvin (2001) states that, “Most educators intuitively know that people who do not know the meanings of many words are probably poor readers” (p. 37). Those children who lack a good vocabulary, struggle to make sense of text and need intervention early if they are to make significant progress in their reading skills.
According to Reading Resources 2005, "Children who are poor readers often do not have the vocabulary knowledge they need to get meaning from what they read. Because reading is difficult for them, they cannot see new words in print often enough to learn them (¶ 2). Struggling readers need vocabulary skills that will enable them to make sense of what they read. If they fail to gain these skills, they will continue to be struggling readers. 

The focus of this study was to determine whether using integrated curriculum from the English and social studies curriculum in a tenth grade English classroom helped students improve reading comprehension and academic vocabulary as well as learn how to transfer the major concepts and themes from one content area to the other. This was also done as a means of combating the high dropout rate among Hispanic students at Freedom High School by providing them with an integrated, meaning-centered curriculum. While there are no statistics that show the drop-out rate decreased, the reading comprehension among the study group did improve significantly.

The basic design of the study was to integrate the vocabulary from the novel, Animal Farm, with the vocabulary (same words) found in the social studies
curriculum and teach the vocabulary from both perspectives to the same tenth grade English class, along with the themes, concepts, and symbolism found in the novel in an effort to improve reading comprehension and vocabulary in both content areas as well as provide students with vocabulary strategies to help them determine meanings of new and unfamiliar words in context in any of their core classes.

The study incorporated the novel, *Animal Farm* because of its recurring themes and vocabulary that students would encounter in later pieces of literature, both expository as well as fiction as well as in their social studies classes. Thematic lessons were used to address the major concepts and themes in the story as well as the vocabulary that was specific to each content area. The investigation also addressed individual reading comprehension levels as well as student performance on district benchmarks from the past two years as well as those which would be administered in the spring semester of 2005. This was measured through the individual student's ability to write about the reading along with discussing the story in small groups and in the large group. This was also measured through test scores from the benchmarks which revealed that overall, most of the students improved in vocabulary
usage and writing. The benchmark scores for the entire class showed an 8\% increase in language arts scores over the scores from the previous year, suggesting that the investigation did help students improve vocabulary skills and reading comprehension along with their ability to use language in writing.

The methods used in the study included lessons that utilized a variety of literacy strategies, vocabulary lessons such as working with prefixes, suffixes, and root words to determine meanings, reader response journals, discussion groups, note taking, and KWL charts as well as "question the author," anticipation guides, and repeated reading. Students also developed word walls and kept vocabulary notebooks in that were used to record important facts about new words or word meanings. Different strategies were employed at different points of the investigation to ensure that students learned how to read for different purposes. For example, students needed to be able to "read to think," i.e., reading to write or to analyze concepts, themes, and symbols and connect that information to prior knowledge. Students also needed to be able to "read to study," i.e., study the major themes and symbols in the novel and make connections to the current class as well as to their social studies curriculum, and
they needed to be able to “read to gather information,” i.e., gathering information about the novel and the author and learning how to use that information to improve their reading comprehension in both content areas as well as gathering information to write about in their reader response journals.

A major area of concern in the investigation was how to help ELD students activate prior knowledge of some of the vocabulary words found in the novel and then make a connection to the English equivalent as well as to the social studies lessons in an effort to improve comprehension in both content areas. KWL’s, as well as different types of vocabulary worksheets were utilized to address this concern and ELD students were paired with stronger readers to ensure they were not left behind.

Other methods or learning strategies used in this study included small group discussions and collaboration, whole group discussions, “ask the author” activities, worksheets, and teacher/student interviews. A few of the interview questions were:

“What have you learned about vocabulary so far?”

“How will your understanding of new words help you in your social studies class as well as other classes?”

“What can you do to help yourself when you don’t
understand what you are reading?"

"Can you list at least three strategies you have learned that will help you read something more difficult than Animal Farm?"

Students were also required to respond in writing to what they were reading, i.e., reader response journals in which they wrote down any questions about the reading or vocabulary words they didn’t understand. They also used the reader response journals to discuss the various characters in the story and analyze them in light of what they had learned about communism, socialism, democracy, and more importantly, the causes behind revolutions. They analyzed their own attitudes toward the reading and recorded what they learned about themselves as a reader. Finally, they analyzed the themes they identified in the story and wrote down their thoughts about those themes as they applied to the novel and to social studies.

Students were required to engage in sustained silent reading as well as oral reading in the whole group. They also did "re-reading" in their individual small groups. A series of small group discussions and whole group discussions were used to help facilitate understanding of how to make connections between the symbolism in the novel and the actual historical accounts of the struggle between
a nation whose economic base was communism and a nation whose economic base is capitalism. These kinds of activities and discussions were implemented in an attempt to help students assimilate the new vocabulary as well as the more global themes found in the novel and then connect it all to the social studies curriculum and finally, to life. These activities were designed to help students utilize these same strategies in other classes as they moved out of the tenth grade.

Each chapter of the novel was read, discussed, and students worked on vocabulary sheets that applied to both the novel and to social studies. They also collaborated on writing projects that required them to discuss specific themes found in the novel and then make applications of those themes to what they were studying in social studies concerning communism. Each student maintained a vocabulary notebook as well as a reader-response journal in which they made daily entries about the reading they were doing. No formal assessment was administered and all writing samples were reviewed by peers in the small groups (see Appendix E for writing samples). These final reviews were done after several sessions were spent reviewing and rewriting papers and no failing mark was assigned as long as each student had attempted to do the writing assignment.
and incorporate a few of the new words into their content. If students made corrections based on what peers had suggested, they were given bonus points. Student performance on writing exercises improved for many students but remained about the same for the ELD students. This would seem to be attributable to their language development. Most of the students' writing was graded at a "B" level. A few students received a "C" because they lacked good organization or did not use peer suggestions to improve their work. The only students who received an "F" were the five who did not participate at all and ultimately, they received an "F" for the quarter because their pattern of not doing their assignments continued up through January. Limitations to the Investigation

One of the limitations of this investigation was the number of participants in the study group. Only one tenth grade English class of 35 students could participate in the investigation due to district restrictions brought about because the English curriculum guides were rewritten over the summer of 2004, long after approval had already been secured to do the investigation from the University. The new curriculum guide called for another novel to be read (A Separate Peace) in the fall semester, pushing Animal Farm forward to the spring semester. Special
permission to deviate from the new novel selection had to be secured before the investigation could move forward. This permission was not granted until mid-September, thereby causing a lengthy delay. Another major limitation to the investigation was time constraints. The curriculum guide also called for the reading of several short stories and poems, as well as practice in descriptive writing and business letter writing to be taught before the December/January benchmarks were administered (many of stories and poems were to be represented on the test and students had to be prepared). Permission was granted on the condition that all the material on the test would be covered before December 15, 2004. Thus, the time frame for the investigation was limited to four weeks and could possibly be stretched into six weeks only in an extreme emergency such as students not completing the reading on time.

Weaknesses of the Investigation

A plan to use "partial" integrated curriculum in just one classroom can be a stressful adventure in light of the content and the restricted curriculum found in most school districts across the country. One major deterrent to curriculum integration involves the state standards and
proficiency tests that are set up in terms of conventional subject areas such as reading, English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Vars (1996) and Beane (1997) suggest that along with this deterrent, comes the huge problem of the sheer number of competencies that are specified in the state standards. Furthermore, "one research team estimates that it would take even a very competent student nine additional years in school to reach acceptable performance in all of the standards recommended by national organizations" (¶. 4). Teaching to the state standards is a huge task regardless of the content area. However, teaching in an integrated classroom may make it easier to teach to the standards since many them are duplicated from subject area to subject area. However, with careful planning and research, this particular study may discover a way in which to connect the state standards from both English language arts and social studies that improved student mastery in both content areas. Thus, since some of the standards for language arts and social studies were not covered, but maybe the weakness is in the standards themselves, rather than in the actual investigation. There is no way to measure this accurately at this time. It may be that the end result of "speeding through" the novel and skimming over the standards will
show up on the state achievement tests in the Spring. However, even with this difficulty, teaching vocabulary through integrated curriculum proved successful, as the results aligned with the research and most participants had significant gains in reading comprehension and vocabulary development.

The Results

The final results of this investigation revealed the need to pursue the use of integrated teaching more and in all classes because of the significant gains made in reading comprehension and vocabulary development. Furthermore, at the end of the investigation, interviews with students revealed that most felt they had made significant progress in reading comprehension and in their ability to use vocabulary strategies to determine meanings of new and difficult words.

Class discussions and individual interviews with students revealed that most of the students understood the symbolism found in the novel once they understood the vocabulary words. From this point they were able to make connections to social studies and to life. Furthermore, as students progressed through the novel, they were more willing to take chances and discuss the reading in open
group sessions as well as in their small group discussions. The social studies teacher reported that this same group was participating more in class discussions and their comprehension level had improved. He stated that he found it interesting that some of the students made connections between Stalin and Saddam Hussein. However, he stated that students should have be given more time to do a more in-depth research project that would demonstrate their understanding of both the novel and the unit on communism.

Another area that had significant improvement was student writing in response to the reading. The reader-response journals revealed that students were thinking about the reading and such things as communism, democracy, human rights, economics, as well as other areas that came up during the reading of the novel. While some students chose not to participate in any of the discussions, activities, or the reading, they will nonetheless, gain from what went on in class because while they may not have participated, they listened and that in and of itself, will bring about positive effects on their learning because they will remember important points that were stressed in the discussions and will be able to use that information later.
What Should Come Next

In light of the positive results of this investigation, further research into integrated curriculum is recommended as teachers and administrators of Freedom High School continue to search for ways to help students improve their performance academically and socially. This investigation demonstrated that integrated curriculum is a powerful tool that can help students improve their reading comprehension, academic vocabulary development, as well make important connections across content areas and eventually, to life. For example, at least twenty-nine students improved their reading comprehension and learned strategies they can use continually to further their academic success as they utilize those strategies in their other core classes. This factor alone demands that further research into integrating the curriculum at Freedom High School should be carried out in an attempt to lower the high drop-out rates, improve academic achievement among struggling students, provide a meaning-centered curriculum for all students and improve test scores on achievement tests such as the CAT 6 and the high school EXIT EXAM.

While twenty-nine students out of a population of twenty-one hundred students seems insignificant, the results of this investigation are extremely significant in
that this group of students has a much better chance of staying in school and graduating than they previously had. Using integrated curriculum in this investigation proved to be an effective tool that helps struggling readers and English language learners improve reading comprehension and vocabulary, thereby allowing those students to gain greater access to written text which will ultimately improve their life styles after high school. In light of these results, this teacher will consider implementing at least partial integration of the curriculum in all classes in the fall of 2005. Furthermore, reading comprehension and vocabulary development were not the only areas that improved during this investigation. Overall classroom behavior improved significantly even among those who did not participate, as students became absorbed in the learning activities rather than in disruptive behavior, thereby suggesting that learning was taking place and this ultimately was the intention of the investigation.

While restrictions still remain concerning the use of integrated curriculum, "partial" integrated curriculum as used in this investigation should be considered as a tool to improve student success across the curriculum at Freedom High School beginning in the fall of 2005.
APPENDIX A

WORD RECOGNITION CHART
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APPENDIX B

"BEASTS OF ENGLAND" SONG
“Beasts of England”

Beasts of England, beasts of Ireland
Beasts of every land and clime,
Hearken to my joyful tidings
Of the golden future time.

Soon or late the day is coming,
Tyrant Man shall be o’rethrown,
And the fruitful fields of England
Shall be trod by beasts alone.

Rings shall vanish from our noses,
And the harness from our back,
Bit and spur shall rust forever,
Cruel whips no more shall crack.

Riches more than mind can picture,
Wheat and barley, oats and hay,
Clover, beans, and mangel-wurzels
Shall be ours upon that day.

Bright will shine the fields of England,
Purer shall its waters be,
Sweeter yet shall blow its breezes
On the day that sets us free.

For that day we all must labour,
Though we die before it break;
Cows and horses, geese and turkeys,
All must toil for freedom’s sake.

Beasts of England, beasts of Ireland,
Beasts of every land and clime,
Hearken well and spread my tidings
Of the golden future time.
APPENDIX C

SAMPLES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT WORD RECOGNITION CHARTS
### Student #1

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APPENDIX D

WORD ORIGINS AND WORD PARTS
WORD ORIGINS AND WORD PARTS

Name ___________________________ Date __________________

Book Title ____________________________________________

Author ______________________________________________

Assignment ____________________________________________

Directions: Select a word from the vocabulary list to complete this activity. Use the dictionary to locate the origin of the word. Select other words from the list to finish this activity.

VOCABULARY WORD: ________________________________

ORIGINS OF WORD: ________________________________

PREFIX ROOT SUFFIX

____________________________________________________

OTHER WORDS WITH SAME PREFIX:

____________________________________________________

OTHER WORDS WITH SAME ROOT:

____________________________________________________

OTHER WORDS WITH SAME SUFFIX:

____________________________________________________
APPENDIX E

STUDENT WRITING SAMPLE
STUDENT WRITING SAMPLE

The pig in the story Animal Farm is like Joseph Stalin because he hated the ordinary people and only wanted all the power for himself. I think that the other animals should not have listened to him from the beginning because it only caused them more trouble and pain than when the farmer was in control. I think the animals should have had another revolution and gotten rid of the pigs and those dogs because they were just selfish and in it for themselves. They were dictators and no one should have listened to them.

This story is a story about how bad communism was to the people in Russia and they suffered because the ones that led the revolution told them all a lie because they just wanted to be dictators like the Czars.

I don’t think I would want to live in a country where I could be arrested for saying I didn’t like something. I am glad that communism isn’t strong like that in Russia anymore.
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