The effectiveness of direct vocabulary instruction strategies to increase the comprehension of fifth grade students during social studies lessons

Octavio Rodolfo Gamez

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIRECT VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION STRATEGIES TO INCREASE THE COMPREHENSION OF FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS DURING SOCIAL STUDIES LESSONS

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

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education:
Curriculum and Instruction

by
Octavio Rodolfo Gamez

September 2006
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ABSTRACT

The direct vocabulary instruction method is one of many different approaches to teaching vocabulary. The direct instruction method helps students move from the familiar to the unfamiliar. The teacher chooses the words and builds lessons to help students learn the new words and how to use them. The words are selected from a reading text. The lessons involve studying the words and their interconnectedness and not on merely the definitions. This study focused on the effectiveness of direct instruction strategies that teachers might be able to use in their classrooms.

Strategies used in the lessons for this study included the use of a vocabulary note guide, using explanations and sample sentences instead of definitions, using pictures to illustrate the words, having students use questioning exercises that fostered critical word analysis, and using semantic mapping and semantic feature analysis. The lessons followed a specific lesson design outline.

The study was implemented in three fifth grade classrooms. Two groups were the experimental group and the other was a control group. The students received lessons in the social studies content area for about two weeks.
There were given a pretest and a posttest. Their scores were compared to see if any benefits could be attributed to using the direct instruction method of vocabulary instruction. The results showed that students who received the direct instruction in the vocabulary words benefited greatly and in most cases doubled their score from the pretest to the posttest. The control group showed minimal to no growth from the pretest to the posttest.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

Vocabulary, the words that represent the concepts one knows, is key to reading comprehension (Klein, 1988). Therefore, vocabulary is of particular interest to teachers in reading and the content areas. Content areas include such subjects as science, social studies, math, history, etc. The study of vocabulary in such disciplines is not just a look at words and their meanings; rather it is the interconnectedness of words that make a focus on vocabulary important. Words help express ideas and concepts in a concise manner that helps the free-flow and exchange of ideas. Vacca (1986) tells us that, "Although words are labels for concepts, a single concept represents much more than the meaning of a single word. It might take a thousand words to explain a concept" (p. 303). Thus with these thoughts in mind, this study is being undertaken to present theory and research focused on the best practices for teaching vocabulary in content areas for students in the fifth grade.
Instruction in vocabulary helps students in three ways (Tierney & Cunningham, 1984). First of all, it helps relate familiar information to unfamiliar words. Secondly, vocabulary instruction serves as an anchor for new information. Thirdly, it develops background knowledge needed for reading comprehension. Sound vocabulary instruction also makes vocabulary accessible to learners of differing backgrounds such as those for whom English is not their first language and to struggling readers (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2005).

Vocabulary instruction has traditionally been present in classrooms across the grade levels and across the nation. However recent refinements in teaching vocabulary would enhance the extent to which students’ comprehension of expository text is facilitated. One challenging issue is that it is often hastily and superficially taught (Tierney & Cunningham, 1984). Nagy (1988) discusses three other challenging issues with some traditional approaches to vocabulary instruction. First, instruction has not lead to in-depth word knowledge. This is because traditional vocabulary instruction methods rely on a definitional approach; this approach is superficial in its depth of understanding a concept since it focuses on definitions and
not on the interconnectedness of concepts/words. Secondly, vocabulary instruction often focuses on the use of the dictionary, which has definitions that are inaccurate and do not convey new concepts easily. Also the definitions found in a dictionary or glossary does not show students how to use the word. It is difficult to write a sentence using an unfamiliar word by simply looking at its definition, and yet students are often asked to do this task to show their comprehension. Thirdly, the contextual approach to vocabulary instruction has its own challenges. The contextual approach relies on students using the sentence around the word for clues to its meaning. However seeing a word in a single context does not give complete or adequate information thus making new ideas difficult to grasp.

There are many suggestions from research that point to effective ways to carry out vocabulary instruction. Tierney and Cunningham (1984) have outlined some basic components of an effective vocabulary program. First, words that are selected for instruction must be keywords in the passage. Secondly, the words must be taught in semantically and topically related sets. Words selected for a lesson should be related and grouped either by their
meanings or by a single underlying concept. Thirdly, the words should be taught and learned thoroughly. Research also has suggested that only a few words be used per lesson or per week. Finally, the instruction should be taught in a spiral curriculum in which the words build on each other and the words span a set of passages and not just one selection of reading.

Blachowicz and Fisher (2005) and Johnson and Pearson (1984) have compiled some of the most effective methods used to teach vocabulary. Some of these strategies are especially helpful if used in the content areas. For example, the use of definition maps, semantic mapping and semantic feature analysis were helpful to help students build that interconnectedness of words. The use of images, acting out words, and discussions about words were also noted. Discussions were key to building an interactive approach to instruction. Also key were strategies that helped manipulate words in reading an writing and especially working with analogies.

The concept of knowing a word in its entirety is broken down by the different aspects of that word. Nagy and Scott (2000) propose that one needs to understand and know these aspects in order for a word to become a part of
ones lexicon. Does one know how to say the word? Or how it is written? What part of speech is it? All these questions must be answered including information on its meaning and how to use it in writing. Word knowledge is also incremental with each exposure more information about the word is acquired (Dale and O’Rourke, 1986, Nagy, Anderson, and Herman, 1987). More importantly word knowledge is multidimensional and interrelated (Nagy and Scott, 2000).

In this study the challenges with incident word learning will be explored. The purpose for such a study is to outline the benefits of direct instruction as an alternative to this method. The focus will be on the direct instruction method; its challenges, success and development. The challenges range from focusing on definitions only (Nagy, 1988) to teachers’ over-reliance on text books for vocabulary strategies and exercises (Hedrick, Harmon, & Linerode, 2004). One of the developments in the last twenty years has been research into what kinds of words are more beneficial to use in instruction. Some suggest words that are high frequency and high utility (Beck & McKeown, 1985) while others suggest academic words are more applicable (Feldman &
Kinsella, 2004). The formation of the Academic Word List (AWL) by Averil Coxhead (2004), used by teachers to narrow down the words to be used for instruction, can be counted as one of the success for vocabulary instruction. Researchers like Feldman and Kinsella have worked to make research applicable in the classroom by devising lesson plans, outlines, and activities that ensure students are acquiring all the aspects of words and interconnecting words to gain true word knowledge. Knowledge that can be applied rather then definitions that can be forgotten.

General Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

The challenge of vocabulary instruction is to find more effective strategies to teach vocabulary. Time is limited in classrooms and the most effective methods need to be found and implemented. Some strategies and methods like definitions maps, semantic mapping and semantic feature analysis have already been incorporated into many studies and therefore have to some degree been proven to be effective (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2005; Johnson and Pearson, 1984). Other methods and strategies, like those of Feldman and Kinsella (2004), are a synthesis of many strategies and
have not been proven to effectively work together. This study will explore the results of putting together many of these unproven or independently proven strategies. Some of the previous studies into the area of vocabulary instruction focused solely on reading comprehension or content area instruction. This study will include both as focal points. The importance of word selection for instruction is also a main point brought up in the study. The textbook as a guide to instruction for the teacher as well as the students is also a sub-point in the study. The main research question: To what extent does direct vocabulary instruction strategies and careful word selection improve the comprehension of fifth grade students during social studies lessons? The sub questions: To what extent are vocabulary note guides useful in helping students acquire vocabulary from a social studies lesson? To what extent is the lesson outline developed by Feldman and Kinsella useful to instruction? To what extent does critical word analysis, using questioning exercises, help in acquiring a word and understanding its meaning? To what extent does using semantic mapping and semantic feature analysis in a social studies lesson help students make connections between concepts? To what extent do
specialized selected words, chosen in semantically and
topically related sets, affect the acquisition of
vocabulary words by fifth grade students in a social
studies lesson?

Significance of the Thesis

This study is significant in that it extends present
vocabulary instruction knowledge. It is supported by
previous studies and researchers. It supports Tierney and
Cunningham (1984) by following some of their finding on
effective vocabulary programs. This study focused on words
found in fifth grade social studies lessons on the causes
of the Revolutionary War, and this incorporates the finding
of Tierney and Cunningham because the words are topically
related. Only a few words were selected per lesson and
they were thoroughly taught as per their suggestion. This
study tried to avoid the pitfalls of other vocabulary
programs as outlined by Nagy (1988). The words were taught
from different angles striving for in-depth word knowledge.
The lessons included a look each words part of speech,
synonyms, other forms of the word, and sample sentences.
The strategies used for instruction were focused on more
than just learning the definitional knowledge of a word.
More importantly the words were taught as to suggest to students that words represent concepts and are interconnected. This study also examined some of the issues of textbook use in the classroom and the dependency of teachers on the resources found with in the teacher's manual (Harmon, Hedrick, & Fox, 2000; Hedrick, Harmon, & Linerode, 2004). Finally this study supported the work of researchers in the field of direct vocabulary instruction like Feldman and Kinsella. Their lesson outline, vocabulary note guide, and questioning exercises were at the center of this study.

Limitations and Delimitations

Vocabulary is of importance to reading comprehension and academic discourse. This thesis will show the benefits that can be gleaned from direct instruction in vocabulary. The focus will be in upper elementary grades but the strategies can be applied across grades K-12. The strategies and assessments were used at the 5th grade level. While this study did have an experimental group and a control group, it does not fit a true quantitative experimental situation because the results of the test were anecdotal in nature. A rubric was created to help quantify
the answers that students gave. A pretest and posttest method of data collection was used. In order to have more subjects participate two classrooms of students were used for the experimental group and one classroom of students was used as a control group. The groups were selected for convenience but also because of their representation of the typical students found in Southern California where the study took place.

Some of the limitations were constraints on time, sample, and resources. Ideally a longer period of time to teach more lessons would have helped in gathering more data on the deeper understanding of the theme and concepts of the unit of study. With more time, longer and more informative writing tasks could have been assigned. Again these would have helped in getting a deeper insight into the thought process of the students in correlation to the direct vocabulary instruction. Ideally a larger sample is always better but at the time it was not possible to involve more classes because of the state testing window about to open during the course of the study. There was one other 5th grade class available at the same school site. However, it was decided that since it was a class made up entirely of Gifted and Talented students that it would be
too different from the populations of the other classes to participate.

The main delimitations for this thesis occurred because of the need to narrow the topic and therefore the results. It would have been ideal to also use the direct vocabulary instruction strategies with fictional/narrative stories as well. The approaches to the lessons are basically the same, but the choosing of the words can be different. They have a different focus; the idea of theme instead of main idea. Other content areas such as science and math would also benefit from using these strategies. However the study would have become too broad and ultimately too difficult to draw conclusions on such a variety of educational topics. The direct instruction strategies could have been also applied as an intervention to target groups like students learning a second language to see how it would have benefited them.
Assumptions

The following assumptions apply in this thesis . . .

1. Persons of all ages have the potential to learn.
2. An individual’s personal background will influence how a person reacts to new information.
3. Learning takes place when students are engaged and active participants.
4. A learned behavior must be reinforced.
5. Learning takes place when the threshold of new ideas is slightly higher than an individual’s current level. If it is too high then the individual may become frustrated or anxious.
6. Teachers use the adopted textbooks to teach lessons. All students have access to textbooks.
7. Reading is essential for success at school.
8. Reading fluency is tied to how many words one can decode and comprehend on sight.
9. A wide vocabulary increases the chance that one will be able to comprehend more when reading.
Definition of Terms

For this thesis, the following definitions apply . . .

1. **Content areas** refer to the areas of study such as history, science, math, biology, chemistry, and physics.

2. **Vocabulary** can refer to all the words that someone knows, learns, or uses in effect an individual's lexicon. More importantly, the words represent the concepts that one knows. In the classroom it can refer to the words selected for instruction or specialized terms in a lesson.

3. **Instruction** refers to the act of teaching where a teacher has set goals and objectives and has organized a learning experience that will reinforce the desired behaviors and outcomes of the lesson.

4. **Incidental Word Learning** refers to vocabulary instruction strategies that focus on reading strategies that help students learn new words by looking at how they are used in a given context. This approach relies on students reading a wide voluminous amount. The idea is that if students use word-learning strategies their reading will be hindered because they will be able to understand a
word by looking at it in the context of the reading selection. Therefore it is known as the indirect method, reading volume, wide reading or incidental word learning.

5. **Direct Instruction** refers to vocabulary instruction that is carefully orchestrated by the teacher. The teacher chooses the words for instruction and presents the words to the students. The idea behind it is that words or interrelated therefore knowledge of one word can lead to a better understanding of many other words.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension

Vocabulary is seen as a desired component to reading comprehension (Bauman, Kame‘enui, & Ash, 2003). It is therefore of particular interest to reading teachers and the content area teachers. They are always searching for ways to help students understand what they have read. Children who do not have a large print vocabulary and have not had experiences that developed oral vocabulary will miss the central theme of the text (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1991). Most importantly in the content areas students need to learn “concepts” and not just “vocabulary words.” A single word can represent an entire semester’s worth of knowledge and it’s up to teachers to use strategies that help students understand this to approach vocabulary (Vacca, 1988). This is vastly different to the traditional sense of vocabulary instruction that focused on merely the definitions of words.

The connection between vocabulary, reading comprehension, and ability level was supported by Francis and Simpson in their 2003 study of first year college
students. The participants in the study were from a large southern university. The 110 first year college students were 65% male and 90% of European descent. The data was collected in three ways. First, all the students took the Nelson-Denny Reading Test to quickly assess their reading comprehension level as well as their vocabulary. Next, The Vocabulary Beliefs Questionnaire was administered to see how they felt about vocabulary in general and how they think it is acquired. Lastly, the students were given a vocabulary task assessment that measured their word knowledge at different levels of understanding. There are three important findings to note in this study. First, the researchers found that students that had a higher reading achievement score also scored higher on vocabulary tasks. This suggests that the more aptitude in vocabulary someone has the more likely that they will understand what they are reading. Next, there was a relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension that supports earlier research. Lastly, researchers found that both low and high achieving students did poorly on the sentence generating portion of the vocabulary task. This last finding will be discussed later in relation to strategies used by students to learn words and instructional methods used by teachers.
Knowing a Word

Vocabulary refers to a collection of words that are stored in one’s mind for quick access in tasks like reading and writing. How does this collection grow? At what point does a word become a fixed and used part of this collection? What constitutes a known word? There are five aspects to knowing a word (Nagy & Scott, 2000). First, the way it sounds. The first step in knowing a word is to know how to orally produce the sounds that make up the word. The next aspect is to know how it is written or spelled. The third aspect to know is how it is used in speech; is it a noun, verb, adjective, etc.? The fourth aspect is the definition and all the multiple meanings a word might have. This is called its polysemy. The final aspect of knowing a word is being familiar with its structure and its origin, morphology and derivation (Nagy & Scott, 2000). These aspects alone are not enough to warrant knowing a word. These are only the receptive, listening and reading, aspects of a word and do not really include the productive, speaking and reading, aspects of work knowledge. When both parts of word knowledge are present then it can be said that one “owns” the word in its entirety.
Nagy, Anderson, and Herman (1987) suggest that there is a process that occurs when one encounters an unknown word in reading. At the first exposure to the unknown word, one stores some memory of how it was used and the context or the situation in the reading. This memory is strengthened by repeated exposure to the word in oral situations or in print. The repeated exposures help to add new information to what is known about the word. In time through many interactions with the word, an applicable knowledge of the word comes into being and one can say that they "know" the word and how to use it. This is important when deciding the best instructional strategies to help students retain and use words.

Similar ideas come from Dale and O’Rourke (1986). Their research showed that word knowledge could be put into 4 levels. At the first level would be that of a person who has never been exposed to that word before; a person would say “I never saw this word before.” The second level can be illustrated with the statement, “I’ve heard of it, but I don’t know what it means.” The third level would be that a person recognizes the word and places it in a context. For example, “I remember seeing it in an automobile manual.”
The fourth and last level would be that of someone that recognizes the word and can use it.

The findings of these last two groups of researchers suggests that word knowledge is incremental. It is not enough to see the word one time and assume that one knows it. Nagy and Scott (2000) concur with this research and go on to explain that word knowledge is also multidimensional and interrelated. It is multidimensional because words have different meanings and are used differently depending on the situation or the message that is intended. Word knowledge is interrelated because words are connected to each other and can be categorized into word families. This interrelatedness or network of connected words is called word schema (Nagy & Scott, 1990).

Incident Word Learning

Many researchers have found evidence that vocabulary increases through indirect contact with words rather than direct instruction (Miller & Gildea, 1987; Nagy & Anderson, 1984; Nagy, Herman, & Anderson 1985; Sternberg, 1985, 1987 cited Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). This approach is known under many different names: the indirect method, reading volume, wide reading or incidental word learning.
Although it has many names the idea is the same; students encounter unknown words in their reading and through these encounters incorporate the words into their collection of vocabulary. This is an area that Stanovich and Cunningham have examined in two different studies (1991, 1992 cited in Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). One was of fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-graders and the other was of college students and in both cases they found that reading volume played a major role in the outcome of multiple assessments on vocabulary, general knowledge, spelling, and verbal fluency.

However not all text is conducive to using context clues within it to figure out the meaning of unknown words (Schatz & Baldwin, 1986). This comes from the fact that not all text is written with parenthetical phrases that help define words within the text itself (Stahl, 1999). Textbooks are often written in this way. Students can expect to see these parenthetical phrases around new or unknown words. The kinds of text that students normally encounter are not written as textbooks and do not necessarily offer that support. Authors do not normally imbed such clues into their works. Students are more able to use context clues on unknown words if the author includes definitions, synonyms, and precise descriptions
Another aspect of wide reading is that students are expected to be able to deduce meanings of unknown or unfamiliar words using only the text. It has been found that many studies conducted into the strategy of getting meaning from context were done using high-frequency words in a cloze-type task (Seibert, 1945; Quealy, 1969, Carroll & Drum, 1982 cited in Schatz & Baldwin, 1986). One example might be, "I like ham and ______ for breakfast." These kinds of studies do not necessarily prove that using context clues on unfamiliar words during reading will help with finding the meaning of low-frequency words encountered in reading. Looby (1939 cited in Schatz & Baldwin, 1999) documented in her study that often times the correct meaning of words were completely misunderstood by the child using the context clues found in the story. Further, students were certain that they had answered the questions correctly even when they were completely wrong. It seemed that they were overly confident in their abilities to glean understanding about an unknown word from the context of the story and the surrounding words. Schatz and Baldwin's 1986 series of experiments showed that while context clues
helped students with unknown words 24% of the time it also confused them 24%, an equal amount of the time. Wittrock, Marks, and Doctorow (1975 cited in Schatz and Baldwin, 1986) demonstrated that even one unknown word could make an entire sentence or passage incomprehensible.

The indirect method also has to contend with the fact that studies show that to learn a word independent of instruction and completely from context a student must be exposed to that word at least six times (Jenkins, Stein, & Wysocki, 1984). Since the bulk of wide reading is done independently it is difficult to make certain that students are developing word-learnign strategies on their own (Lehr, Osborn, and Hiebert, 2004).

Direct Vocabulary Instruction in the Content Area of Social Studies

The indirect or incidental word learning approach can be a very valuable method for vocabulary instruction, but it does not address all the instructional needs of students and teachers. Contrary to the indirect approach is direct and explicit vocabulary instruction. This approach focuses on students learning specific words whereas incidental learning is based on random encounters with unknown words.
Direct instruction is more teacher-centered than incidental learning which puts the reader in charge of using strategies. The teacher guides the instruction and sets up the encounters with the words. This direct approach is very useful for teaching in the content areas, specifically social studies in the elementary grades. Since the language of social studies is demanding and academic, the direct approach is beneficial because teachers can use the text to focus on specific vocabulary and concepts. Another reason that explicit instruction goes well with social studies instruction is that many proven strategies for teaching concepts in history also focus on teaching special terms.

While the idea of direct vocabulary instruction is not a new strategy, it is currently being implemented incorrectly in many classrooms. There are three main challenges with direct instruction in vocabulary as implemented by many teachers (Nagy, 1988). The first challenge is that it is not being used as much as research suggests would be beneficial for students. When it is used it is based only on definitions and rarely uses generative tasks to reinforce the word. This second challenge lies in the students' understanding of what word knowledge looks
like. Many see the study of vocabulary as only dealing with words' definitions. They do not see the full range and freedom of learning to use new words. Rather they focus on memorizing definitions and not on how to apply that knowledge. The third challenge with the implementation of direct vocabulary instruction is teachers' attitudes about vocabulary instruction, as well as teachers' over-reliance on textbooks for strategies and word selection. The following studies will focus on these problems and show what vocabulary instruction currently looks like in many classrooms.

Even though the direct approach is found in classrooms, it is not as prevalent as is recommended by the National Reading Panel nor is it being utilized effectively in many cases. Scott, Jamieson-Noel, and Asselin (2003) conducted a study in upper-elementary classrooms to see how vocabulary instruction was being carried out. They looked at 23 classrooms in 3 different districts in Vancouver, Canada. They found that over half the day (52%) was spent on literacy and 12% of that time was used for vocabulary instruction. This however is only 6% of the day. Vocabulary instruction occurred most often as whole class instruction. It made up 45% of time spent on vocabulary,
individual work made up 37%, partner work was 13% and 5% in small group. The total amount of vocabulary instruction was divided into three groups. Isolated vocabulary made up 24% of instruction and vocabulary in language arts (novels, spelling, and writing) made up 52%. Vocabulary in other subjects was the third group accounting for the final 24%. This last group included math (14%), social studies (8.3%) and art (1.4%). Instruction in academic and content area vocabulary only accounted for 1.4% of the time spend in school. The type of instruction was also looked at and divided into three main areas: definitional (39%), contextual (78%), and semantic knowledge (46%). These categories were not mutually exclusive in regards to activities. The most despairing finding was that 20% of the entire time allocated for vocabulary was spent looking up definitions and copying them from either the dictionary or the textbook.

Looking up definitions and copying them down is just one of the traditional strategies still in use even though there is little support from research for such activities. Another strategy traditionally used to teach vocabulary is to assign a list of vocabulary words for the week, students are asked to memorize the definitions of the words, and
then given a test at the end of the week. Stahl and Fairbanks discovered in their research that children did not develop enough word knowledge from definitional-only based instruction to help them on reading comprehension tasks (1986). They also found that children did far better on comprehension tasks when they had received both definitional and contextual information about the targeted words during instruction. Francis and Simpson (2003) documented with their work how first-year college students felt about the study of vocabulary, how it merely involved the memorization of definitions. They had only been challenged in schools to memorize definitions. They did not write very meaningful sentences using the vocabulary words, even though they had received instruction on those words. However they were able to answer correctly on multiple-choice assessments using those same words. This helps corroborate earlier studies that found that students could answer multiple-choice questions on words but could not appropriately use the words in a new way (Curtis, 1987). This research suggests that students are not reaping the benefits of direct instruction. By focusing on the definition of a word and only the definition during instruction, students are left without a true understanding
of the word. Students are left with a vague sense of the word; they cannot use it in their own writing. Since it does not receive proper reinforcement it does not become a part of a student's lexicon.

Teachers' beliefs and practices are ultimately responsible for the instruction that students receive. Hedrick, Harmon, and Linerode (2004) conducted a study about teachers' beliefs and practices of vocabulary instruction and how they used social studies textbooks. This qualitative study was done by sending surveys to teachers in grades 4-8. Researchers found that over 70 percent of the teachers that answered the survey prescribed to the knowledge hypothesis of vocabulary acquisition, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of words and the importance of accessing prior knowledge to learn a new word. This shows teachers' awareness of important vocabulary methodology. However 50 percent of teachers believed that students learned words through multiple exposures to words' definitions contrary to research on the matter (Stahl & Fairbanks 1986). As much as 20 percent of the group also believed that learning a new word meant only acquiring its definition. This focus on definitions also is evident in the fact that 48 percent of the teachers in
the study did not have their students write sentences using the vocabulary words. On the other hand, 42.5 percent reported having students write explanations of the words on vocabulary tests (Hedrick, Harmon, & Linerode, 2004). This is a far stretch for many students, they have had no practice in using the words in writing and yet their test is based on their ability to use the word in writing. They reported that they do try to expose students to words multiple times; 46 percent said 3-5 times and 40 percent said 6-9 times (Hedrick, Harmon, & Linerode, 2004). Unfortunately this meant repeated exposure to the definition and not the word’s use in other contexts or in studying a word’s nuances. Some of the encounters with definitions merely included looking up words in the glossary or the dictionary before reading the social studies text. Thirteen percent of the teachers said that they had students spend from thirty minutes to an hour on this activity while 40 percent reported spending less than 30 minutes. Reported class discussion of prior knowledge about the units’ new vocabulary ranged from 20-30 minutes (37 percent) to 10 minutes (34.2 percent) for most teachers (Hedrick, Harmon, & Linerode, 2004). Time spent on vocabulary instruction in social studies is spent mainly on
definitions of words and students receive little support in acquiring words beyond that. This is astonishing because of the number of teachers that seem to believe in the knowledge hypothesis that focus on words' interconnectedness and not on words' definitions. They seem to believe that words interconnectedness is important and yet they focus their instruction on merely the definitions.

The problem of teachers' beliefs and practices is compounded by the fact that textbooks are the primary material used by teachers as the basis for instruction (Armbruster & Anderson, 1988) and many of these textbooks do not support direct vocabulary instruction but instead antiquated notions about vocabulary instruction and the importance of words' definitions (Harmon, Hedrick & Fox, 2000). Teachers are comfortable with these textbooks that perpetuate traditional strategies and concepts about vocabulary instruction. In Hedrick, Harmon, and Linerode's 2004 study of teachers' beliefs about vocabulary instruction, 83.5 percent rated their social studies textbook as being between adequate and very good. Almost 85 percent went on to say that their textbook did an adequate to very good job of clarifying new terms (Hedrick,
Harmon, & Linerode's 2004). It is not clear what the teachers answering the survey meant by stating that their textbook did a good job of clarifying new terms. Is it that the book has definitions within the text and immediately following the newly introduced word? Did the book and its supplemental materials have good strategies for aiding students in acquiring new words? In either case, it is clear that teachers rely on textbooks to guide their vocabulary instruction. Fifty-seven percent of the teachers in Hedrick, Harmon, and Linerode's 2004 study marked that they used the word lists provided by the publishers for instruction. Only 21.9 percent of the teachers made their own lists. These findings again point to the reliance of teachers on textbook publishers to have the best strategies in mind. Is such confidence warranted?

Harmon, Hedrick, and Fox (2000) looked at social studies textbooks for grades 4-8 in order to better assess how textbook publishers are meeting the needs of teachers and students in the area of vocabulary instruction. The study focused on three areas: what kinds of words are chosen for instruction, how are they presented, and what support do they give? They looked at textbook series for social studies from the main publishing houses in the
By carefully identifying, categorizing, and analyzing the key terms used selected by publishers they found that 78 percent of the key terms were from a domain-specific category (Harmon, Hedrick, & Fox 2000). In other words, the vocabulary words chosen mostly had to do with social studies. The words were specific to this area and would not likely be found outside of a social studies text. Thirteen percent of the key words chosen were actually specific people, places, and events. General vocabulary only made up 8 percent of the words chosen for instruction (Harmon, Hedrick, & Fox, 2000). Textbooks are first and foremost for reading; over half the teachers (51 percent) in Hedrick, Harmon, and Linerode’s 2004 study said that students read the textbook in one way or another. Students were assigned to read it independently (at home or in class) or in pairs at least 40 percent of the time. This makes the need for direct vocabulary instruction so important. The terms used for instruction should help students comprehend what they are reading and not just to
know specific terms that cannot be extended outside the social studies lesson.

Where and when publishers include vocabulary instruction components for teachers to use for instruction was another part of the study. They found that vocabulary instruction was found most often at the chapter level. The main reason for this is that the section of vocabulary review at the end of the chapter was counted as an instructional component (Harmon, Hedrick, & Fox, 2000). Other instructional components were writing activities such as letters, speeches, journal entries, summaries, travel brochures, biographies, playlets, and general sentences and paragraphs (Harmon, Hedrick, & Fox, 2000). It is a great leap for students to go from little to no instruction in the words (other than writing definitions down) to writing activities where they have to be able to use the word correctly. Sufficient practice with a word must occur before a student has internalized the word (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). The researchers found that about half (50 percent) of the exposures to a word in a textbook occurred only 1 to 2 times (Harmon, Hedrick, & Fox, 2000). Finally many publishers kept using the same traditional activities such as crossword puzzles, matching exercises,
true/false statements, and fill-in-the-blank activities (Harmon, Hedrick, & Fox, 2000). These kinds of activities are only surface-level knowledge of words. The need for more instruction in vocabulary is required in order for students to truly benefit. The vocabulary components outlined in social studies textbooks in this study were broken down into three main categories. The instructional component was about 18 percent. The application category was about 42 percent, and the review category was roughly 40 percent (Harmon, Hedrick, & Fox, 2000). The students are asked to apply word knowledge without really having much instruction on the words. They spend a lot of time reviewing concepts that were not thoroughly developed. This study points to the problems caused by textbooks that are not up-to-date with current teaching strategies and to which teachers use so much for reading instruction.

The previous studies on direct vocabulary instruction in social studies point to many of the pitfalls that teachers today have to navigate through or avoid. The following studies will offer ways to effectively teach vocabulary instruction with an emphasis on the direct method and how it can help textbook reading comprehension. One common argument against direct instruction is that
there is no way to teach all the words in a language to a child using a direct method. Researchers currently accept that students add about 2,000 to 3,500 words to their reading vocabulary a year (Anderson & Nagy, 1992; Beck & McKeown, 1991). Seeing it in print and recognizing it is still only receptive vocabulary, but at least it is a start at quantifying the number of words that a student should be expected to know at any given time. In order to be made aware of an unknown word one must encounter it in either its written or verbal form.

Two major considerations for choosing words for direct instruction are that the words should be central to the concept in the specific text used for instruction and the likelihood that the words will be encountered frequently in reading (Beck, McKeown, & Kukan, 2002). The first consideration speaks to the words importance. If students must leave the lesson with any words learned, it should be those that are important to the main concept. The second consideration, frequency, helps prepare students for wide reading. These words will be seen again because of their frequency therefore students should know them. Conversely, what is the benefit of learning a word that will not likely be seen again any time soon? However this is often the
case in the words that are selected by publishers of textbooks. The teacher’s editions of textbooks in reading, math, science, and social studies usually have a list to go with each lesson. Hiebert (2004) advises that these words are often so rare that students will not likely see them again in their reading that year. Many times the words that are chosen for inclusion on the list for textbooks are done so because they are so rare (Feldman & Kinsella, 2004). Teachers do not always agree with the words that a publisher will select for instruction but will often go along with the chosen words (Harmon, Hedrick, & Fox, 2000; Hedrick, Harmon, Linerode 2004).

Beck and McKeown (2002) try to solve the problem of relying on textbooks for vocabulary words by showing how words can be separated into three tiers and therefore which words teachers should choose for direct instruction. The first tier is made up of basic words like sister, room, sun, jump, etc. The second tier is made up of words that are of high frequency for students that have good language and word learning backgrounds. These words can be found across many different disciplines. The third tier contains words that are of low frequency and can usually only be found in one discipline like science or history. To get
the most out of instruction it would be beneficial to teach
students words that they likely do not know but that they
will be experiencing across many disciplines like similar,
achieve, and culture. Tier one words are, for the most
part, already known by students that are reading at a basic
level. Tier three words are: specific and should be dealt
with as a part of the content area classes in which they
occur. Words selected by a teacher could be measured
against these tiers for their usefulness. Teachers cannot
rely on textbooks publishers to pick the words that should
be used for instruction.

Averil Coxhead’s research (2000) offers another
possible solution to the dilemma of selecting words for
direct instruction. She focused her work on academic
words. These words (for example: expand, guideline,
category, and temporary) are important to academic text but
are viewed as supportive and not really as a central part
of the text. She looked at 3.5 million running words from
414 academic texts in arts, commerce, law, and science.
She also included academic journals, edited academic
journal articles, and university text books. If the word
(word family) occurred at least 100 times in the different
texts she included it on her academic corpus (Coxhead,
2000). The frequency of these word families in academic text led to the creation of the Academic Word List (AWL). Her research has important implications for direct instruction. First, the words contained in the AWL are found in different disciplines but are not specific to one area. Words like economy, establish, issue, major, respond, percent, and require could be found in a math, history, or science textbook. Of course these words are only the most frequent form of a word, but they and their word families point to the interrelatedness of words discussed earlier. Since these words can be found across the disciplines, teachers and students reap the benefits of developing a word knowledge bank that ultimately gives students access to more material. The other helpful aspect of the AWL is its size; it is made up of only 570 words. This is a much more manageable number of words for instruction. It could be divided among grade levels at a school site and each grade could take responsibility for a part of the list. Another use for teachers is that they can choose words from a piece of literature or text book then match them against the AWL to verify that they are high utility words.
Feldman and Kinsella (2004, p. 10) suggest five guidelines for choosing words to teach regardless of the content area.

- Choose "big idea" words that name or relate to the central concepts addressed in the passage (e.g. democracy, independence, fossil fuels, ecology).
- Choose high-use, widely applicable "academic tool kit" words that students are likely to encounter in diverse materials across subject areas and grade levels (e.g., aspect, compare, similar, subsequently).
- Choose high-use "disciplinary tool kit" words that are relevant to your subject area and that you consider vital for students to master at this age and proficiency level (e.g., metaphor, policy, economic, application, species).
- Choose "polysemous" (multiple meaning) words that have a new academic meaning in reading in addition to a more general, familiar meaning (e.g., wave as in "wave of immigrants" vs. a greeting or ocean wave).
- Especially when dealing with narrative texts, identify additional academic words (not included in the reading selection) that students will need to know
in order to engage in academic discourse about the central characters, issues, and themes.

Once the words are selected for instruction then teachers need to decide how to set up their direct instruction lesson. Before a teacher plans a lesson, they should consider the outcome of the lesson and the vocabulary program as a whole. Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) organized a scale to judge how demanding a vocabulary program truly is. On the lowest part of the scale a vocabulary program focuses only on the rote memorization of definitions or of a word in only one context. This is called association processing. The next level up is comprehension processing in which a student shows that they comprehend the word by doing tasks such as finding a synonym for the word or classifying it with other words. The highest level on the scale is generative processing in which children apply the knowledge of a word by creating a sentence with it or just coming up with a definition in their own words. These tasks can be performed orally or written down. Generative processing was found to lead to better retention of word knowledge.

The first part of the lesson should be designed to set up a purpose for learning. It is important to help
students get past the idea that vocabulary instruction is just memorizing definitions. They need to be aware that they do not “own” a word if all they know is the definition. Having students first fill out a knowledge rating checklist will help them be conscious of what words they are familiar with and to what degree they know the words (Blachowicz, 1986; Dale & O’Rourke, 1986 cited in Stahl 1999). The checklist can have four columns: one for the word, the other three can be titled Can Define, Have Seen/Heard, and Don’t Know. A student then reads each word and checks off the corresponding box with their intuition about their knowledge of the word. Simpson and Francis (2003, p.75) used the iceberg analogy with students to get them to understand that the definition is like the part of the iceberg that sticks out of the water. It is only the beginning of the iceberg, just as the definition is the basic understanding of the word. The hidden part of the iceberg is the rest of the word knowledge about the target word. It includes its synonyms, antonyms, examples of how to use it, and its relationships with other words (Stahl, 1999).

Once a purpose for instruction has been set and the words have been briefly introduced, it is time for the
teacher to introduce each word with clear examples and not just the definitions. Feldman and Kinsella (2004) developed a five step model for direct instruction of vocabulary based on research into the area.

- First the teacher will pronounce the word for the students and have them repeat it two or three times. "Option, say it with me, Option." This will help students put the word into their oral vocabulary or receptive vocabulary.
- Next the teacher will explain the new word in language that is familiar to students using synonyms or phrases that will help students make connections between words. "An option is like a choice. It is when two things or more things are shown to you and you have to choose one."
- The third step is to provide multiple examples of the word in different contexts. One suggestion on this step is to have students help complete the sentences by saying the target word in the explanation. "My mom let us choose between tacos or pizza for dinner. She gave us an _______ (students fill in the blank with option)."
• The fourth step is to have students elaborate on their word knowledge using the target word to come up with new examples (e.g. "When did your mom last give you an option?" or "Which option would you choose, Disneyland or Sea World? Support your answer").

• The fifth step is to assess students in a variety of ways besides just definitions of words. These assessments can be formal or informal. One way suggested by Feldman and Kinsella is to use discrimination tasks like asking focused questions ("What option do you think your parents want for you, no uniforms or school uniforms?") The two other ways are generative tasks. The first is a completion activity in which the students have to analyze the first part of a sentence and complete the second part so that it explains the underlined word in the first. "I could tell Joel was not happy with his vacation options for the summer;____________________________________." The second activity is Yes-No-Why. In this one, students have to evaluate the sentence and see if they think it is logical and then explain their ideas. "Teachers
should give students the option of not doing their homework if they play sports after school."

In a separate article, Kinsella (2004) also made a note-taking guide (referred to in this study as vocabulary note guide) that incorporates many of the ideas from her research into vocabulary instruction. This guide is given to students to help them follow along with the teacher as target words are introduced. It includes important information about the words such as part of speech, synonyms, definitions, example sentences in different contexts and if available a picture relating to the target word (see Table 1). She also suggests that as students become familiar with the format, the teacher leave blanks on the page for the students to fill in. That is why she named it "note taking guide." This helps focus on the lesson and the teacher's direct instruction in order to discover the correct words to put in the blanks. The vocabulary note guide is also very helpful for English Language Learners that often need to see things in print and not just hear the teacher give the information. The vocabulary note guide also helps by guiding the lesson in a concise and effective manner. This guide eliminates having to think of situations and context for words on the spot.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Synonym/Explanation</th>
<th>Example/Image/Showing Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>approached, v.</td>
<td>to move closer to someone or something</td>
<td>The hostess at the restaurant approached us to take our order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>option, n.</td>
<td>a choice</td>
<td>My mom let us choose between tacos or pizza for dinner. She gave us an _____.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two very useful strategies for teaching vocabulary in the content areas are semantic mapping and semantic feature analysis (Nagy, 1998). Both strategies deal mainly with the relationship between words. Semantic maps help students make connections between new words and prior knowledge. First identify the main topic and place it at the center of the graphic organizer. Second have students brainstorm words that are associated with the main topic. Next the students discuss how to group these words into broad categories and discuss the meanings of the words. Then the teacher asks students to provide labels for the categories. Students then generate words or subcategories for each category. Finally discuss the vocabulary and the interrelationships of categories and subcategories (Nagy,
1998). Below is an example of semantic mapping using the word "colonists" as the main topic. This could have been the result of an "Early Colonial Period" lesson in social studies in a fifth grade classroom (see Figure 1).

Figure 2. Example of Semantic Map

Semantic Feature Analysis also helps students integrate new information with prior knowledge and deals explicitly with relationships among word meanings (Nagy, 1998). This strategy is mainly based on designing a matrix. First the teacher develops a grid with a set of
vocabulary words in one column and a list of features in a row. Students then discuss the meaning of the words and how they are associated. Then they place a + or a - to show whether or not a word has that feature (Nagy, 1998). This strategy takes a lot of modeling to help students learn to complete the grid (see Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>New England Colonies</th>
<th>Middle Colonies</th>
<th>Southern Colonies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>slavery</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plantation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commons</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meetinghouse</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Example of Semantic Feature Analysis
CHAPTER THREE
DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Design of the Investigation

This study was designed to answer the overarching question, does the implementation of direct vocabulary instruction strategies improve the comprehension of fifth grade students during social studies lessons? In order to answer this question all five sub questions needed to be answered because they outlined specific strategies that other researchers had tried or had developed. The five sub questions were: 1) To what extent are vocabulary note guides useful in helping students acquire vocabulary from a social studies lesson? 2) To what extent is the lesson outline developed by Feldman and Kinsella useful to instruction? 3) To what extent does critical word analysis, using questioning exercises, help in acquiring a word and understanding its meaning? 4) To what extent does using semantic mapping and semantic feature analysis in a social studies lesson help students make connections between concepts? 5) To what extent do specialized selected words, chosen in semantically and topically related sets, affect the acquisition of vocabulary words by
fifth grade students in a social studies lesson? The sub questions were answered by looking at the complete process of instruction including the lesson outline, handouts given, and results from the pretest and the posttest. Some of the answers came in the form of anecdotal record while others could be illustrated with students’ answers on the pretest and posttest.

In order to answer the first sub question the vocabulary note guides were not given to the control group. An inference could be drawn that since they did not have the benefit of such a tool, that they would not do as well on the assessments. Their usefulness could also be explained in an anecdotal account of what was observed by the researcher as he and the students used the tool. The control group was given the assignment of looking up the words in the dictionary and writing them down. This of course was meant to illustrate the results that a student might receive if they only did this kind of vocabulary development. The second sub question could only be related anecdotally but a difference in result between the experiment and control group could be attributed in part to the lesson design. The third sub question could be related by looking at the responses on the assessment. This could
be measured by looking at the number of students that scored higher on the posttest. The experiment group received critical word analysis handouts for each of the two lessons. The control group did not receive these handouts and therefore should not have become proficient at analyzing words in this manner. Since the lessons are in the content area of social studies the fourth question addresses some proven techniques for acquiring vocabulary. This was measured in this study by the responses to questions number 1 and 4 on the posttest. These two questions addressed words that received direct instruction using the semantic mapping and semantic feature analysis strategies. Examples from the two questions can help to illustrate the connection between using the strategies and being able to discuss a word (concept) at length. The fifth research sub question could be partially answered by the results to the fifth question on the pretest and posttest. This question is an explanation question that asks the student to label a picture with the correct word. This test had a picture of a group of soldiers (a different picture on the pretest and posttest) and the students had to figure out if the picture showed soldiers advancing or charging. These are topically related sets of words and
the explanation given by students can illustrate the depth of understanding between these two words. By learning one word they could juxtapose against the other word and then by carefully studying the picture they could use clues to support their choice. The main research question, to what extent does direct vocabulary instruction strategies and careful word selection improve the comprehension of fifth grade students during social studies lessons?, can be answered by looking at the trends, patterns, and results of the pretest and posttest. The answer can only be inferred and probable explanations given, but a case can be made when the results show a pattern.

Subjects

The study included 3 fifth grade classes. All three classes were at the same Title I School in the Corona-Norco Unified School District in Southern California. One class had 22 students (Class A), another (Class B) had 30 students, and the other (Class C, the control group) had 27 students. All three classes have English Language Learners (ELL’s); one had 4 ELL’s, the other had 6 ELL’s, and the control group had 10 ELL’s. The ELL students were assigned a level according to their performance on the California...
English Language Development Test (CELDT). Class A had 1 student at CELDT level 2, 3 students at CELDT level 3, 1 student at level 4, and 1 student at level 5. This class was made up of 13 male students and 9 female students. Class B had 3 students at CELDT level 4 and one student at level 3. This class was made up of 14 male students and 16 female students. Class C had 1 student at CELDT level 1, 4 students at CELDT level 3, and 5 students at CELDT level 4. This class was made up of 15 male students and 12 female students.

The classes were chosen for their convenience and selected on the basis of being accessible to the researcher. The classes were all chosen because they fit the criteria of being fifth grade classes at about the same point in the school year and same point in the text book. It was important that the students not be exposed to the content of the lessons yet in order to get valid results from the pretest and posttest. Although the samples were not randomly selected, they do represent a substantial proportion of the population of students in the Corona-Norco Unified School District (46% Hispanic, 40% White), Riverside County (51.7% Hispanic, 33.4% White) and California (32.4% Hispanic, 46.7% White). Class A was made
up of 15 Hispanic/Latino students (68%), 6 White students (27%), and 1 student that declined to answer (5%). Class B was made up of 30 Hispanic/Latino students (100%). Class C was made up of 26 Hispanic/Latino students (96%) and 1 White student (4%).

Treatment

In order to answer the main research question and sub questions for this study, seven different areas were considered and instruments were created by the researcher where needed. The areas were lesson selection, word selection, developing a vocabulary note guide, developing the test with a rubric, making handouts with critical analysis questions, designing semantic maps and semantic feature analysis handouts and the lesson design. No existing assessments or handouts were used. The study lasted approximately 2 weeks for each class. The first area of consideration was the lessons to be taught. After speaking with the fifth grade teachers from the classes chosen to participate in this study, the unit that covered the beginning and root causes for the American Revolution was selected for instruction. The chapter was taken from the textbook A New Nation: Adventures in Time and Place
California Edition by Mr. Graw Hill. It is the adopted fifth grade text for the Corona-Norco Unified School District. Two sections were picked for their topically related vocabulary, “The Thirteen Colonies Rebel” and “The Revolution Begins.”

The second area to be considered was which words would be chose for direct instruction? The vocabulary words used in the test came from the reading selections used for instruction. The lessons were on the causes for the American Revolution and how the revolution began. The selection process of the words used for instruction occurred after the researcher read the selection three times in order to see what the salient terms might be and therefore should be considered for direct instruction. When choosing the words, the researcher looked at the guidelines put forth by Feldman and Kinsella (2004, p.10) and on the Academic Word Language (AWL) by Coxhead (2000). The same terms that Feldman and Kinsella used in their work to describe categories of words for instruction (big words, academic tool kit, disciplinary tool kit, polysemous) were also used in this study. The term selection process was important because it correlated directly with the fifth sub research question (To what extent does specialized selected
words, chosen in semantically and topically related sets, affect the acquisition of vocabulary words by fifth grade students in a social studies lesson?) and the main research question (To what extent does direct vocabulary instruction strategies and careful word selection improve the comprehension of fifth grade students during social studies lessons?). The 12 words chosen for direct instruction were: liberty, rebel, protest, assembly representation, correspondence, militia, revolution, delegates, congress, charge, and advance. The words were put into 4 basic categories. The "Big Idea Words" were liberty, rebel, protest, and revolution. They were chosen because they are central concepts to the cause of the American Revolution. The "academic tool kits" words are representation and correspondence. One word appears on the AWL under a different form (correspond); the AWL only lists the most frequent form of the word. The other (representation) was a highlighted key word in the Longman Dictionary of American English, which the researcher used to find the definitions used on the vocabulary note guide given to students. The "disciplinary tool kit" words included delegates, congress, and militia. They are both relevant to social studies and are important for students to master
at this proficiency level. The “polysemous” words were assembly, charge, and advance. These words have multiple meanings and are used in the text in a way unfamiliar to students.

After the words were selected the third area to receive attention was the vocabulary note guide. The guides were made on a word processor program. The chart included three important parts. First the term or word to be studied was typed into this box along with its part of speech and other forms of the word. The second box included an explanation and or synonyms. It is important to note that the explanation is not just a definition. It includes information that helps sort out misconceptions about a word. For example the word “assembly” might cause confusion for students that think that an assembly in a meeting between students and teachers at a school, while in this selection it is used as a group of representatives that meet to make laws. The last box might include a sentence or a picture, both of which illustrate the term and make it as concrete as possible. Pictures were found on the internet that helped to illustrate most of the terms and inserted into the chart (see Table 3). In order to find the information to make this vocabulary note guide,
the researcher used the Longman Dictionary of American English. It contains sample sentences as well as definitions that are more explanatory than definitions found in more common dictionaries. It is important to note that the control group did not receive vocabulary note guides. The were given the list and told to look them up in the dictionary and use then as guide. The teacher did go over the definitions with then on the second day of the lesson to ensure that they had the correct meaning down for the word.
The Revolution Begins P.336-341

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Synonym/Explanation</th>
<th>Example/Image/Showing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>revolution, n.</td>
<td>♦ a time when people change a ruler or political system by using force or violence</td>
<td>♦ There were many heroes who fought in the Mexican Revolution like Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>militia, n.</td>
<td>♦ a group of people trained as soldiers who are not members of the permanent army</td>
<td>This picture shows one of the Minutemen, part of the American militia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Partial Vocabulary Note Guide

The fourth area to prepare for was the pretest and posttest. The test was created after the words were selected and the guide complete so that the question and answers would match the handouts used for instruction. The data collection instrument (pretest and posttest) was
created by the researcher and evaluated the level of word knowledge that each student had about the 12 target words in the study. The posttest was in an equivalent form to the pretest. The instructions and types of questions were the same, but the sentences used were worded differently to maintain the reliability of the test. The assessments are crucial in order to address the main research question, (To what extent does direct vocabulary instruction strategies and careful word selection improve the comprehension of fifth grade students during social studies lessons?). The pre and post tests were designed as generative tasks that tested students understanding of the word beyond its definition and required students to be able to correctly use it in writing as well as analyze what was known about the word (Feldman and Kinsella, 2004). Generative writing tasks were chosen because generative processing was found to lead to better retention of word knowledge and was considered to be necessary in a truly demanding vocabulary program (Stahl and Fairbanks, 1986). Both the assessments had the same types of questions and assessed words from the vocabulary note guide. The first type of question is an activity called Yes-No-Why. On this type of questions students had look at a sentence and focus on how the
underlined word was used. Students then had to evaluate the sentence and see if they thought it was logical and then explain their ideas (Feldman & Kinsella, 2004).

"Teachers should give students the option of not doing their homework if they play sports after school." The second type of question is a completion activity in which the students had to analyze the first part of a sentence and complete the second part so that it explained the underlined word in the first part (Feldman & Kinsella, 2004). "There are many good ways to protest;___________."

The third type of question was designed to give students more room to express their understanding of a word by explaining how and why they selected a term to describe a picture provide to them. One example from the test shows Colonial American troops moving across a battlefield with their guns down and ready to fire. The student had to decide if the picture showed the troops charging or advancing. If they understood the nuances between the words, they would be able to discern the correct term to use. Their explanations gave insight into their word schema and degree of understanding of the word. The explanation section was the same question in the pretest and posttest; however it used different pictures to see
what if any new information the students could discuss in their answers after having gone through the lessons.

As part of the test both the pretest and posttest were graded using a 4 point rubric for each question type. This helped convert the open-ended questions into more quantifiable data. The rubric was also designed by the researcher. Blanks answers and “I don’t know.” answers were counted as a zero on the rubric. It was the expectation that the students would do better on the posttest since they received direct instruction on the terms and become familiar with these three types of questions. The lessons also gave students the opportunity to look at pictures that visually represent some of the terms, thus helping to cement ideas about the nouns and explore the way a verb (action) would look.

The fifth area to be considered for the study was the development of the critical analysis questions handouts using the selected vocabulary words. These pages were developed using the same template as the questions on the test. Again they were chosen because of the generative writing tasks that they asked the students to do. The same kinds of questions were used “Yes-No-Why” and “Completion.”
The sixth area developed for this study was the creation of the semantic map and semantic feature analysis chart. Both of these strategies have been shown to improve the comprehension of content area concepts (Nagy, 1988). As such they were included in one of the sub research questions (To what extent does using semantic mapping and semantic feature analysis in a social studies lesson help students make connections between concepts?).

The actual lesson design was the final component of the treatment. It incorporated the synthesis of strategies put together by Feldman and Kinsella. A summary of the instructional procedure was as follows: 1. Administer pretest, 2. Introduction of terms using note-taking guide, 3. Pre-reading activities, 4. Reading the text, 5. Mastery check worksheet (critical analysis questions), 6. Content area vocabulary instruction strategy (semantic mapping or semantic feature analysis), 7. Repeat steps for lesson two (minus pretest) and 8. Administer the posttest. The instructor/researcher followed a “scripted” lesson to ensure that all the different parts of the lessons were completed and to ensure that both classes received approximately the same instruction. See Table 4 for a more detailed look at the lesson design.
### Table 1. Lesson Design Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Before the Lessons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♦ Chose the words for instruction from the reading selection after reading it. Focused on the academic took kit, disciplinary tool kit, the AWL, polysemous words, and big idea words.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Wrote the assessments and designed rubric for grading.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Made the Vocabulary Note Guide, using the Longman dictionary to find good explanations and example sentences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Search online for non-copyrighted pictures to use in the Vocabulary Note Guide or for instruction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Designed the Check for Mastery questions, keeping them similar to the assessment questions to familiarize students on how to answer these kinds of questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Chose and made the content area graphs to use for instruction. (Semantic map and Semantic Feature Analysis)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Teaching the lessons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♦ First gave out a vocabulary rating checklist to make a purpose for reading.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Second gave instruction on Vocabulary Note Guide.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-pronounce the word out loud/repeat with me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-go over the part of speech “This is a noun.” Explain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-look at explanation of the word, read, discuss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-go over example sentences or picture then have students say the word as the teacher reads the sentence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ask questions that uses the vocabulary word in a way that students must come up with a response or evaluate the statement based on their knowledge of the word.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 3</th>
<th>Independent/partner work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♦ Pre-reading activities like a picture-walk or summarizing the lesson from the day before (if on consequent days).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Reading the selection in different ways, teacher reads, partner reads, independent reading, and volunteer reads.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Used Mastery Check worksheet and content area strategy page.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Went over the worksheet using examples from the rubric.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On day one of the study the students were given an assessment (pretest) to see what their level of understanding was for the words that were used in the study. The students were given about 15 minutes to complete the 5 question assessment. After the pretest was collected the students received a checklist for the six words in the first lesson. The checklist was designed to help students rate their knowledge of the words and set up a purpose for learning, and acquiring new vocabulary (Blachowicz, 1986). The class then received a note-taking guide that included information on the vocabulary words like parts of speech, synonym, definition, and example sentences for the target words. The teacher went over the notes on the first day following the presentation model created by Feldman and Kinsella (2004). On the second day the students read the selection in different ways: teacher read, partner read, independent reading, and volunteer read out loud. If time allowed they began working on the Mastery Check page to check for understanding and allowed them the opportunity to practice using the terms in a generative way (Stahl and Fairbanks, 1986). On the third day the students went over the Mastery Check with the teacher to see how they did and to get experience using
the rubric. The teacher and students then worked on the content area vocabulary strategy, semantic map or semantic feature analysis (Nagy, 1998). The following lesson cycle was very much the same as students received direct instructional vocabulary activities throughout the week. The difference being that the culmination was a formal assessment (the post test). The instructor/researcher followed a “scripted” lesson to ensure that all the different parts of the lessons were completed and to ensure that both classes received approximately the same instruction.

In order to account for internal and external threats to the validity of the study, the study was carefully looked at and appropriate solutions were implemented. The three classes selected for the study were done so because of their similar make up of students. Class A did have more ELL students, and their CELDT levels were lower than Class B. Class C had even more ELL students but their CELDT levels are in the midrange. However these classes were similar in make-up and ability level as those in the school and in the general population area (Southern California). Subject attrition was not a major weakness since only 1 student of the 48 students was absent for the
posttest for the experiment group. It is also important to note that both classes each had one student that was not in attendance the entire duration of the study, 6 school days. These three students were excluded from the final data of the experiment group’s results. From the control group 4 students were not included in the study, 3 were not present during the pretest or the posttest and 1 was a CELDT level 1 and could not read the test in English. Maturation, an internal threat to validity brought about by subjects changing over a long period of time between pre and posttest, was also not a weakness of this study since the lessons and assessments occurred within 9 days of each other. Since all three classes are self-contained and did not have a scheduled break in which to share what was being taught, there was no diffusion of treatment. The two experiment classes were on the same lesson cycle and neither one receive instruction in advance of the other. The control group was on a different lesson cycle because they were on vacation while the experiment treatment was going on. The researcher followed the same lesson design for both experiment classrooms and was careful not to give added information to one group. Since there was only one researcher, different personalities or different styles of
instruction did not have an adverse affect on either class' performance. The effect of being a subject in the experiment was kept under control since the class was using the same text book they had used all year and were instructed that these were social studies lessons. The homeroom teacher was in the classroom to see that students did not behave in an unusual manner than they were accustomed to. One external threat that was minimized was that of the novelty or disruption effect. This effect can come about when individuals react positively with increased motivation or participation because they are doing something new and different. The researcher taught two lessons (over two weeks) to the students in order for the students to become accustomed to the change in routine from what they usually do for vocabulary instruction in social studies. By the second lesson they had gotten the routine down and the element of originality had subsided. If not for time constraints it would have been beneficial to have extended the treatment for a month and to have covered a whole unit using the strategies to further reduce the novelty effect.

Instrumentation was closely monitored by checking the reliability of the pretest and posttest. Both tests used
the same time limits, directions, the same sampling of questions, and the same scoring procedures. The testing sessions were protected from being interrupted as well as keeping the environmental factors monitored (room temperature, light, and sound). The only factor that could not be accounted for was the time the test was taken. The pretest was administered at the usually designated time for social studies in the afternoon in both classes. However the posttest was not administered at the same time the following week because the school had begun their state testing and their usual schedule was not in effect. Both classes took their posttests in the morning. Class B had their test administered to them around 10:00 a.m., but Class A was under pressure to finish because their lunch time was approaching. It was noted that 3 students were kept in the classroom to finish the posttest for approximately 4 minutes after the rest of the students were dismissed for lunch. One further threat to the internal validity of the test was the experience of a field trip just before the posttest. Both experimental classes went on a field trip during the study. They went the day before they took their posttest. The lessons and topic were about the causes for the American Revolution and the beginning of
the war. The field trip was to Riley's Farm where colonial life is reenacted for the students to participate in. They were exposed to some reenactments of things like the Stamp Act, Quartering Act, and "trained" as a militia soldier. While these were some of the topics we discussed in the lesson they were not a part of the vocabulary posttest. Only in the explanation section of the test was it noted that three students made reference to something that they specifically learned on the field trip. The control group also went on the trip but at an earlier time and it was not fresh on their minds when they received this direct vocabulary instruction.

Data Treatment Procedures

The tests were administered to both classes by the researcher. The tests were collected and graded using a 4 point rubric. Each type of question had its own rubric. Responses of "I don't know" or blank responses were assigned a 0. The pretest and posttest both had the same amount of questions: 2 Yes/No/Why, 2 Completion, 1 Explanation. The data was first gathered by class and by type of question. Averages were then found for each type of question and the scores were separated into passing and
not passing. A passing score was a 3 or 4, and a non-passing score was a score of 0-2. The passing scores were added to each other to form a total of passing and non-passing answers. This data was represented on bar graphs that showed the number of passing answers and not the number of passing students. This was also represented with the percentages of passing and non-passing scores.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Presentation of the Findings

The main research question was: To what extent does direct vocabulary instruction strategies and careful word selection improve the comprehension of fifth grade students during social studies lessons? The sub questions were: To what extent are vocabulary note guides useful in helping students acquire vocabulary from a social studies lesson? To what extent is the lesson outline developed by Feldman and Kinsella useful to instruction? To what extent does critical word analysis, using questioning exercises, help in acquiring a word and understanding its meaning? To what extent does using semantic mapping and semantic feature analysis in a social studies lesson help students make connections between concepts? To what extent do specialized selected words, chosen in semantically and topically related sets, affect the acquisition of vocabulary words by fifth grade students in a social studies lesson?
The results of the pretest for both the experimental classes and the control group were very similar (see Table 5). Looking at the three types of questions (Yes/No/Why, Completion, and Explanation, see Appendix) students had a more difficult time with the completion questions. Class A had all 21 of the students fail this exercise on the pretest. Class C also had all 23 students fail this section of the pretest. Class B had 26 fail this task and 1 score passing. The other two types of questions also showed a very minimal amount of students that achieved a passing score on the pretest.
Table 2. Pretest Results by Number of Students Passing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class A</th>
<th>Yes/No/Why Pretest</th>
<th>Completion Pretest</th>
<th>Explanation Pretest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Passing</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score of 0-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score of 3-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class B</th>
<th>Yes/No/Why Pretest</th>
<th>Completion Pretest</th>
<th>Explanation Pretest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Passing</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score of 0-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score of 3-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class C</th>
<th>Yes/No/Why Pretest</th>
<th>Completion Pretest</th>
<th>Explanation Pretest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Passing</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score of 0-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score of 3-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another way to look at the results of the pretest is to look at the percentage of students that did and did not pass the test (see table 6). The results were similar for all three classes. The average that did not pass was about 87% and the students that passed the test only reached an average of 13%.
Table 3. Pretest Results in Percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pretest Class A</th>
<th>Pretest Class B</th>
<th>Posttest Class C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Passing Score of 0-2</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing Score of 3-4</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before looking at the results of the posttest, it is important to once more look at the differences between the experiment group and the control group. The experiment group, Class A and Class B, received direct vocabulary instruction that followed the Feldman/Kinsella method. This group also received strategies such as the vocabulary note guide, practiced answering critical word analysis questions, and worked on graphic organizers such as a semantic map and semantic feature analysis chart. The control group received the same list of words, but they had to look up the words in the dictionary. This of course simulates more of the traditional methods used for vocabulary instruction. The teacher did go over the vocabulary words with the students on the second day of the lesson to ensure that they had the correct meaning of the
word. Both experimental and control groups read the same section from the social studies text in the same manner (teacher read-aloud, partner reading, and individual reading followed by restating to your partner).

The posttest did show an improvement in scores on all three types of questions (Yes/No/Why, Completion, and Explanation) for the experimental group. In the completion exercise, 11 students passed from Class A where before none had passed. That is, almost half the students were able to score a passing grade on this section. From Class B, 19 passed compared to 1 on the pretest. The control group did not receive direct instruction or used the vocabulary note guide; it also did not show a marked improvement. Where Class A was able to get 11 students to pass the completion portion of the test and Class was able to get 19 to pass, Class C was only able to get 3 students to pass. It was similar with the other two sections of the test. Class C did not show improvement to the degree that Class A and Class B showed improvement (see Table 7).
Table 4. Posttest Results by Number of Students Passing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class A</th>
<th>Yes/No/Why Posttest</th>
<th>Completion Posttest</th>
<th>Explanation Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Passing Score of 0-2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing Score of 3-4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class B</th>
<th>Yes/No/Why Posttest</th>
<th>Completion Posttest</th>
<th>Explanation Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Passing Score of 0-2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing Score of 3-4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class C</th>
<th>Yes/No/Why Posttest</th>
<th>Completion Posttest</th>
<th>Explanation Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Passing Score of 0-2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing Score of 3-4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 shows the average percentages of passing to non-passing students illustrates how the control group did not fare as well as the other two experiment groups. The control group kept the exact same number of passing students to non-passing students as they had in the pretest. The experiment classes moved at least half of
their class over to the passing side and Class B almost got three-fourths of their class to pass.

Table 5. Posttest Results in Percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Posttest Class A</th>
<th>Posttest Class B</th>
<th>Posttest Class C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Passing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score of 0-2</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score of 3-4</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion of the Findings

In order to answer the first sub question, to what extent are vocabulary note guides useful in helping students acquire vocabulary from a social studies lesson?, the vocabulary note guides were not given to the control group. An inference could be drawn that since they did not have the benefit of such a tool, they did not develop a full understanding of the words and therefore did not increase their scores from pretest to posttest. The usefulness of the vocabulary note guides was helpful in maintaining a flow of the lesson. Students also seemed to better understand and were drawn in more to the lesson by
looking at the pictures used in the note guide. It was also a good discussion starter about the words. The word "protest" had a picture of a father and daughter protesting war. The little girl was on the father's shoulders and was holding a sign that read "Kids for Peace." The father held up a sign that read "Impeach President Moron." The students were then able to discuss what kinds of things one should put on a sign if one is trying to persuade another. This evidence as to the usefulness of the vocabulary note guide was observed by the researcher as he and the students used the tool. The control group was given the assignment of looking up the words in the dictionary and writing them down. This of course was meant to illustrate the results that a student might receive if they only did this kind of vocabulary development. Subsequently, the control group did not do as well on the posttest as did the experimental group. The experimental group did have access to the vocabulary notes guide.

The second sub question, to what extent are the lesson outlines developed by Feldman and Kinsella useful to instruction?, could only be related analogously but the teacher noted that the lessons provided a routine for word acquisition that simulates how one naturally learns words.
Nagy and Scott (2000) relate in their research that first one must learn how to say a word, then how it is spelled, then what part of speech it is, and finally the definition and its multiple meanings. This is exactly how Feldman and Kinsella have organized their instructional strategy. The experiment group seemed to benefit from it since their scores almost doubled into the passing section.

The third sub question, to what extent does critical word analysis, using questioning exercises, help in acquiring a word and understanding its meaning?, can be related by looking at the responses on the assessment. The experiment group received critical word analysis handouts for each of the two lessons. The control group did not receive these handouts and therefore should not have become proficient at analyzing words in this manner. The results illustrate how the control group did not grow, and this can be attributed to their lack of experience with word analysis exercises.

Since the lessons are in the content area of social studies the fourth question, to what extent does using semantic mapping and semantic feature analysis in a social studies lesson help students make connections between concepts?, addresses some proven techniques for acquiring
vocabulary. This was measured in this study by the responses to questions number 1 and 4 on the posttest. These two questions addressed words that received direct instruction using the semantic mapping and semantic feature analysis strategies. Examples from the two questions helped illustrate the connection between using the strategies and being able to discuss a word (concept) at length. The response question 4 of the posttest completion questions demonstrates the students' deeper understanding of the themes of the social studies lessons. The question was "There are many good ways to protest a new law; __________________________" and the students had to give a response that helped to complete the sentence and showed that they understood the underlined word. After doing the semantic map about protests (see appendix) students were able to easily come up with multiple ways to "protest" a new law. Some students scored a passing 3 on this question because they did not write a complete sentence (see rubric in appendix) but they clearly showed their understanding of protests and how protests work through their responses: "...by doing a sit-in, going on strike, and not buying a product," "...like sit-ins, boycotts, are good ways to protest if you don’t want that law their making," and one
student wrote "...but a riot is a bad way to protest." Most of these answers came directly from the discussions in class. Students wrote down what they remembered about the discussion on "good ways to protest" and referred back to the answers that they gave on the semantic map.

The fifth sub question was, to what extent do specialized selected words, chosen in semantically and topically related sets, affect the acquisition of vocabulary words by fifth grade students in a social studies lesson? This question could be partially answered by the results to the fifth question on the pretest and posttest. This question is an explanation question that asks the student to label a picture with the correct word. This test had a picture of a group of soldiers (a different picture on the pretest and posttest) and the students had to figure out if the picture showed soldiers advancing or charging. These are topically related sets of words and the explanation given by students can illustrate the depth of understanding between these two words. By learning one word they could juxtapose against the other word and then by carefully studying the picture they could use clues to support their choice. The performance by Class B on the explanation question on both assessments can be used as an
example of their deeper understanding of the vocabulary through the use of the direct instruction strategies. On the pretest 21 students did not get a passing score on the completion question, and on the posttest 21 students scored a passing grade. The question was the same but the picture used in the question was different. It asked students to look at the picture and decide if the men shown were charging or advancing on the battlefield. They were also asked to use details from the pictures. One student wrote on her pretest answer, “I think they are advancing so they can keep on trying and practicing in case of an emergency or something because the troops want to keep us safe they want to protect their country and family.” In her response she discusses other ideas about the soldiers in the picture but does not really remain focused on the task, whether they are advancing or charging. On her posttest, she responded, “I think that they are advancing because it doesn’t look like they’re going to shoot it looks more like they’re putting the guns down cause they’re on their knees. And if they were charging then they would be in shooting position.” In her second response she had more to say about the picture and was more convincing with her defense for the word she chose.
The main research question, to what extent does direct vocabulary instruction strategies and careful word selection improve the comprehension of fifth grade students during social studies lessons?, can be answered by looking at the trends, patterns, and results of the pretest and posttest. One can infer that the reason that the experiment group did so much better than the control group was because they were taught using the direct instruction method and the teacher gave them lots of support with the use the vocabulary note guide that used pictures and the semantic mapping strategies. The second part of the main question asks about the necessity for teacher to choose the words for instruction carefully. As stated in the literature review, textbook publishers do not always choose words that would be beneficial for students to receive instruction in. One category of words that is often overlooked is the "polysemous" category. Feldman and Kinsella (2004) describe this category as words that students might know but that have new meanings associated with in the context of the reading selection. One of these words selected for inclusion in the study was "assembly." In the social studies text it referred to the American colonists demand for their assemblies' decisions to be
heard in the law-making process in England. Students however were more familiar with assemblies as a meeting of the school for presentations, awards, and special announcements. This was evident in their responses on the pretest question that included the word “assembly.” The completion question read, “It is important to have assemblies in our country or else ______________.” Students responded with: “school assemblies would not award kids at school,” “people won’t know what’s going to be today or the rest of the days (what’s happening?),” “our troops will not get awards of what they do to our state.” Their understanding of assemblies clearly needed to be refined before engaging in the social studies text and yet this was not included as a term for close study by the textbook. On the posttest, students had a better understanding of the word and could even relate it to another of the selected words, “congress.” On the yes/no/why posttest question, students were to read the sentence, “An assembly and a congress are really the same thing.” Then decide if it made sense and defend their selection. Students did not confuse it with school assemblies: “Assembly and congress are the same thing because they both elect people and they both have meetings
in a house or spot." "Yes because an assembly is a group of people that make decisions, and a congress is also people who make decisions." These examples seem to infer that students benefit when the teachers choose the words for instruction. Teachers work with students everyday and can see where they might benefit from looking at a certain word a little closer.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Vocabulary instruction, the teaching of words that represent concepts, is a field of study unto itself. There are many different takes on how it should be done. One widely accepted method is the implicit method that relies on students wide reading and on students learning how to use context clues to find out the meaning of a word. Its counterpart is the direct instruction method in which the teacher plans the lessons to maximize the opportunity for students to grasp new concepts. That is after all the most important aspect of vocabulary, the concepts that are labeled with words.

Vocabulary instruction is important because it gives students access to new information. It helps students move from the familiar to the unfamiliar. If done right, that shift can happen seamlessly. This study focused on some of the strategies that teacher might be able to use to make this shift happen for their students in their classrooms.

The lesson outline developed by Feldman and Kinsella is a model that seemed to help students with acquiring new vocabulary. The vocabulary note guide was also beneficial
for students as well as the teacher. It served as a point of reference for everyone to start from and it helped natural discussion come about in an effortless way. The students also benefited from the proven semantic maps and semantic feature analysis. Their associations with the word protest soon had them learning new words like "sit-in," "riot," and "hunger fast." This is after all what vocabulary is all about, the interconnectedness of words and their ability to contain "big" ideas in a single word.

By implementing direct vocabulary instruction strategies in social studies lessons some useful data came about. First it demonstrated how beneficial the vocabulary lesson designs using the Feldman/Kinsella method were in helping students gain a deeper understanding of the vocabulary in a social studies lesson. Most students in the experimental group nearly doubled their score. In the two experimental classes, one class had a 57% pass rate and the other 71% pass rate. Considering that only 15% of class passed on the pretest and only 10% of the other class passed on the pretest.

The written responses on the tests also point to students becoming better able to articulate what they know about a word. Their responses were more focused on the
words in question when they had been given adequate knowledge to glean from. It is unlikely that just by reading the definitions in a dictionary or glossary that students would have been able to respond they way they did. The vocabulary notes that were distributed to students as part of the lesson really seemed to aid students in their discussions and activities about the vocabulary. They referred to it often during discussions. Students also seemed to be engaged in vocabulary acquisition as they repeated the correct pronunciation aloud back at the teacher and filled in the word in a choral response activity. Both teachers stayed in the classroom as the researcher conducted the lessons; both commented on how the approach seemed to foster a deeper understanding of the words.

The selection of words for instructions was also an important aspect of this study. Students need instruction in words they do not encounter in narrative reading. Academic words and “polysemous” words (multiple meaning words) are two categories of words that require that attention. Academic words since they appear so often in academic work and because they are often necessary to conduct discourse in classrooms. Words like “assembly” and
“charge” were two words in this study that illustrated how students see words in the content areas and associate them with the word with the meaning they already know, not really looking to see if it might have a new different meaning in this context. As in the case of assembly, students associated it with a large meeting at school instead of a part of the legislature. Did it really make sense that Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson were meeting to hand out awards to the other colonists? By using and planning with the direct instruction method, teachers can better be prepared to teach vocabulary lessons that will benefit students and truly get them ready to understand the lesson’s content. That is the key of vocabulary instruction, comprehension.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study was conducted with a quasi-experiment as its basis. It would be of great benefit to see the ideas behind this thesis tested using a more experimental design. It would be interesting to see how a control group fared without the direct instruction. A greater sample of students and schools would also yield interesting results.
The focus of this study was in the content area of social studies. These strategies would also be of benefit to science lessons. Research needs to be done in this area to see its effects. There a great amount of vocabulary used in math textbooks. What if these words were given this kind of treatment? Would students do better in math if they had a stronger linguistic background on the words they used in math lessons? Finally to what extent did the ELL students benefit from the strategies? Are there other strategies that would be best for to use with them? The direct approach and the careful strategic selection of words would also benefit students in literature classes and basal readers. More research into that area is also needed.
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